

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PEOPLES

AND OTHER ESSAYS
IN POLITICAL CRITICISM

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by

DWIGHT MACDONALD



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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PEOPLES

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PEOPLES

We talk of the Turks and abhor the cannibals; but may not some of them go to heaven before some of us; We may have civilized bodies and yet barbarous souls. We are blind to the real sights of this world; deaf to its voice; and dead to its death.

HERMAN MELVILLE

Germans have thought in politics what other peoples have done. . . .

Although Germany has only accompanied the development of nations with the abstract activity of thought, without taking an active part in the real struggles incident to this development, she has, on the other hand, shared in the suffering caused by national development without sharing in its enjoyments, or their partial satisfaction. Abstract activity on the one side corresponds to abstract suffering on the other side.

Consequently, one fine day Germany will find herself at the level of European decay before she has ever stood at the level of European emancipation. The phenomenon might be likened to a fetish-worshipper who succumbs to the diseases of Christianity. . . .

The only liberation of Germany that is practical or possible is a liberation motivated by the theory that declares man to be the Supreme Being of mankind. . . . In Germany, no brand of serfdom can be extirpated without extirpating every kind of serfdom. . . . The emancipation of Germans is the emancipation of mankind.

KARL MARX (1844)

Now I must say goodbye. Tomorrow mother goes into the gas chamber, and I will be thrown into the well.

FROM A LETTER WRITTEN BY A CHILD
IN A POLISH "DEATH CAMP"

"WE WERE A little nervous when she was taken," the girl's mother said afterwards. "You never know what will happen when they start to use the electric needle. But we should not have worried. She never gave the Germans a single name or address and no one was arrested."

The girl was a member of the French underground; she was caught by the Gestapo; she was tortured, while her mother was held in a nearby cell so she could hear her daughter's screams; and she died. This was Europe under the Nazis: the matter-of-fact reference to torture; the technological modernity of the instrument; the mother's politicalized attitude—"we should not have worried", since "she never gave a single name". Something has happened to the Germans—to some of them, at least; something has happened to Europe—to some of it, at least. What is it? Who or what is responsible? What does it mean about our civilization, our whole system of values? This is the great moral question of our times, and on what our hearts as well as our heads answer to it depends largely our answer to the great practical questions.

In this article, I want to consider this question as an aspect of the general problem of what my friend, Nicola Chiaromonte, calls "the responsibility of peoples".

In the last war, we believed many "atrocities stories" which later turned out to have been propaganda. Compared to the German atrocities which are reported by the press in this war, those of 1917, however revolting in detail, were (1) quantitatively negligible (rarely involving more than a score or so of alleged victims), and (2) deeds done in hot blood by individual soldiers using bayonets or guns rather than the systematic tortures and massacres with specially designed instruments that are now reported. So tender was the civilian mood of those days that the British were able to arouse great indignation over the execution of Edith Cavell, who, as a spy, by all the rules of warfare "deserved" her fate. Today we are more tough-minded—we have to be, or go crazy, so severe are the shocks administered to our moral sensibilities, indeed to our very nervous systems, by each morning's newspaper. Yet even so, one's heart fails at some of the reports.

The French War Crimes Commission recently estimated that between 200,000 and 250,000 French civilians had been killed by the Germans during their occupation of France. The Commission has also assembled a museum of torture devices: branding irons, pincers for pulling out fingernails, an

"electrical shoe", a steel helmet studded with screws that can slowly be tightened. . . . Not since the Spanish Inquisition has such an array been seen. Who would have dared predict, in the 19th century, that one of the most advanced nations in Europe would employ such instruments? Marx himself might well have shrunk from the supposition. His epigram of 1844 must now be reversed: the Germans have *done* in politics what other peoples have up to now dared only to *think*.

In the last war, all this could have been dismissed as propaganda. But the great difference between the "atrocities stories" of World War I and those of World War II is that the latter are as convincingly authenticated as the former were not. To disbelieve the accounts of today, one would have to assume that almost every war correspondent is a liar on a Munchausen scale, that various neutral observers are liars, that certain internationally known religious and charitable institutions have fabricated detailed reports. We know, also, from the Nazis' own theories and from what they did in Germany itself that such horrors are not improbable.

Let us not only accept these horrors; let us insist on them. Let us not turn aside even from the greatest of all: the execution of half the Jewish population of Europe, some four million men, women, and children, in Silesian and Polish "death factories".* In the last war, the farthest our propagandists ventured was to fabricate the tale of the German "corpse factories", in which the bodies of dead soldiers were alleged to have been boiled down for their fat and chemicals. Not only was this untrue, but it would never have occurred to any one in 1917 even to *invent* a story about abattoirs in which human beings took the place of

* This essay appears here as published in "Politics" for March, 1945. The following footnote was added in 1953: Later estimates put it at six million. By an ironical twist of history, the victims have now become oppressors in their turn. Since 1948, some 800,000 Arab refugees, who fled from Palestine during the fighting, have been living wretchedly in camps around the country's borders maintained by U.N. charity. The Israeli government—opposed by no important Jewish group that I know of—refuses to let them back and has given their homes, farms, and villages to new Jewish settlers. This is rationalized by the usual "collective responsibility" nonsense. This expropriation cannot, of course, be put on the same plane as the infinitely greater crime of the Nazis. But neither should it be passed over in silence.

cattle. And yet we know, from irrefutable evidence, that *these things have been done*. They are part of our world and we must try to come to some kind of terms with them.

Detailed reports about the "death camps" have only come out within the past year. The chief ones I have seen are the descriptions of the camps at Auschwitz and Birkenau in Upper Silesia which appeared in the *N. Y. Times* of July 2 and 5, 1944, sent in from Switzerland; the stories in the *Times* (August 27) and *Time* (September 11) based on a Russian-conducted tour of the former death camp at Maidanek; and the report, based on stories by three eye-witnesses who were able to escape, of the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps that was released by the War Refugees Board, a Government agency, on November 26, 1944. The first report is the most impressive, because it was put out by the well-known Swiss relief organization, the Fluchtlingshilfe of Zurich, whose head is the Rev. Paul Voght. It is also sponsored by the Ecumenical Refugee Committee of the World Council of Churches. But in all the reports, the atmosphere is the same: rationality and system gone mad; the discoveries of science, the refinements of modern mass organization applied to the murder of non-combatants on a scale unknown since Genghis Khan.

These camps, which the Nazis called "model extermination camps" and which were operated by specially trained *Judenvernichtung* (Jew-killing) experts, were literally "death factories", often with railroad sidings running into them for the transport of their raw materials. These "materials" were processed in an orderly fashion: shaved, bathed, deloused, each given a slip of paper with his or her number typed on it, then routed into another room where this number was tattooed on the body—on the breasts of the women. (So in Kafka's "The Penal Colony", the mechanism executes the criminal by tattooing the record of his crime on his body—one of too many modern instances in which reality has now caught up with Kafka's imagination.) The co-operation of the victims was necessary to save time (and make production records possible). By experiment, it was found that death came quicker when the body was warm, washed, and wet. The execution buildings were

therefore sometimes given the appearance of bathing establishments, the illusion being methodically carried out by having two attendants in white jackets give each victim a towel and a piece of soap. There were even simulated shower-entries in the death chamber itself: a concrete room into which as many naked persons were packed as possible. "When everybody is inside, the heavy doors are closed. Then there is a short pause, presumably to allow the room temperature to rise to a certain level, after which SS men with gas masks climb the roof, open the traps in the ceiling, and shake down a preparation in powder form labelled 'Cyklon, for use against vermin', which is manufactured by a Hamburg concern. It is presumed that this is a cyanide mixture of some sort which turns into a gas at a certain temperature. After three minutes, every one in the chamber is dead." The bodies were then taken into the crematorium (which at Maidanek looked like "a big bake-shop or a very small blast furnace"), where they were cut up by butchers, loaded onto iron stretchers, and slid on rollers into the coke-fed ovens. With such methods, death was produced on a mass scale: at Birkenau alone, over a million and a half persons are estimated to have perished from April, 1942, to April, 1944.

As in the Chicago stockyards, no by-products were wasted. The clothes and shoes were shipped into Germany to relieve the shortage of consumption goods: "We came to a large warehouse. It was full of shoes. A sea of shoes. . . . They were piled like coal in a bin halfway up the walls. Boots. Rubbers. Leggings. Slippers. Children's shoes, soldiers' shoes, old shoes, new shoes. . . . In one corner, there was a stock of artificial limbs." Also: "Near the ovens were the remains of a room with a big stone table. Here gold fillings were extracted from the teeth. No corpse could be burned without a stamp on the chest: 'INSPECTED FOR GOLD FILLINGS'." The ashes and bones of the burned bodies were used to fertilize cabbage fields around the camps. Nor did the Germans, devotees of science, lose the chance to advance human knowledge. All identical twins that passed through Birkenau were removed for "biological examination" at a German scientific institute. In the Vosges

section of France, a "laboratory camp" was recently discovered, where thousands of persons were experimented on, always with fatal results. Some were vivisected, some were given leprosy and plague, some were blinded (to see if their sight could be restored), many were put to death by gas while observers watched their reactions through a window. Perhaps the most humanly appalling details of all were certain juxtapositions which one would be tempted to say showed a typical Germanic tastelessness, were it not for our own "war-theme" advertisements. Thus at a Dutch camp, there were found certain cells so constructed as to cause death by slow suffocation—and a nursery for prisoners' children whose walls were decorated with scenes from fairy-tales. And at Maidanek, the camp loud-speaker blared out all day over the countryside. . . . Viennese waltzes.

But enough! We may say that those who planned and carried out such things were insane. This may have often been true, in a medical sense. But once granted the ends, the means were rational enough—all too rational. The Nazis learned much from mass production, from modern business organization. It all reads like a sinister parody of Victorian illusions about scientific method and the desirability *in itself* of man's learning to control his environment. The environment was controlled at Maidanek. It was the human beings who ran amok.

I. THE GERMAN WAR CRIMES ARE UNIQUE

A considerable portion of the atrocious acts of the Germans in this war are chargeable rather to war in general than to any special inhumanity of the Germans.

There was much moral indignation, for example, about the robot bombs. But the effects of "saturation bombing", which the British and American air forces have brought to a high degree of perfection, are just as indiscriminate and much more murderous.

The Allied air chiefs [states this morning's paper], have made the long-awaited decision to adopt deliberate terror

bombing of German population centres. . . . The Allied view is that bombardment of large German cities creates immediate need for relief. This is moved into the bombed areas both by rail and road, and not only creates a traffic problem but draws transport away from the battle front. Evacuation of the homeless has the same result.

The only mistake in the above is to say the decision has just been adopted; actually, the Allies have used "terror bombing" for several years. We might also recall the indignation we felt, in 1940, at the strafing of refugees by the Luftwaffe. "How typically Nazi" we exclaimed—but we were more tender-minded in those days. The first contracts have already been let for the manufacture of our own robot bombs, and no one at all conversant with modern warfare doubts that the robot bomb will be a key weapon in World War III.*

The ruthless economic exploitation, accompanied by mass starvation, to which the Nazis subjected Europe when they held it was deplorable. But our own press for many months now has carried articles about the failure of the Allies to provide any more food to the "liberated" (and hungry) Europeans than the Germans did (and often, as in Italy and Belgium, not as much). "Military necessity" apparently rules "us" as absolutely as it ruled "them", and with the same terrible results for the peoples of Europe.

Some of the most horrible brutalities chargeable to the Nazis have been committed in their attempts to deal with the maquis. Throughout military history, *franc-tireurs* have always been dealt with severely; the Hague rules of warfare even authorize the shooting of civilian hostages in reprisal for *franc-tireur* attacks on the invading soldiery. One should not forget that the Germans occupied almost all of Europe for four years, and that our own armies are only just beginning to occupy enemy territory. If a

* Six months after this was written, "we" humane and democratic Americans dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, destroying in the twinkling of an eye some 90,000 civilians—men, women, and children. This was the climax of the Anglo-American policy of massacring civilian populations from the air, a policy which later evidence shows to have been morally indefensible, politically disastrous, and militarily of dubious value. See Appendix A. (Footnote added in 1953)

German resistance movement materializes that is anything like as determined as the one the Nazis had to deal with, we shall probably see our own armies climbing down a bit from their present pinnacle of moral superiority.*

Even the extermination of large numbers of helpless people is not so unknown in modern times as our own propagandists would have us think. Great numbers of the coloured races have been wiped out since 1800 by the whites: the "rubber atrocities" of the Amazon and the Belgian Congo (cf. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*); the large-scale executions that followed the Boxer Rebellion in China; the slaughter of the bulk of the Australian Black-fellows and the American Indians; not to mention dozens of lesser "episodes" throughout Asia and Africa. In England itself, furthermore, in the first half of the last century, millions of men, women, and children of the working class were starved and worked to death in conditions which were often almost as brutal and degrading as those of Maidanek and which had the disadvantage of prolonging the victims' suffering much longer (cf. the Parliamentary "Blue Books" of the period, Engels' *Condition of the English Working Class in 1844*, or J. L. and Barbara Hammond's *Lord Shaftesbury*). And in Soviet Russia in the last fifteen years, millions of peasants and political prisoners have been starved to death in State-created famines or worked to death on forced-labour projects.

After the acids of sophisticated inquiry have done their worst, however, a considerable residue remains. It is this residue which makes the German atrocities in this war a phenomenon unique at least in modern history.

It is partly a question of the intimate individual cruelty shown in much of the Germans' behaviour. That the Allied forces will execute hostages and burn down towns if "neces-

* The resistance did not materialize, and, on the whole, the conduct of the American and British armies in Germany was no worse than that of most conquerors—a modest enough standard. The Red Army, however, sunk far below even this standard. The first few weeks of the Russian occupation of Eastern Germany, Austria, and Hungary were an orgy of unrestrained and wholesale raping and killing on a scale unknown in the West for many centuries. See the four terrible first-hand reports by survivors I printed in *Politics* (January, 1946, pp. 4-8; October, 1946, pp. 315-19). (1953)

sary" I have no doubt; but I should be surprised if they do it on the scale the Germans did (50 lives for one was the lowest "rate of exchange") or with the brutality and sadism shown in the extermination of whole villages and the common use of the most revolting tortures.

But it is mostly what might be called the "gratuitous" character of the worst atrocities. What has been done by other peoples as an unpleasant by-product of the attainment of certain ends has been done by the Germans at Maidanek and Auschwitz as an end in itself. What has been done elsewhere in violation of the doer's code of ethics, and hence in a shame-faced way draped over with hypocritical apologies, has been done here in conformance with the avowed Nazi moral code, and thus done as publicly and proclaimed as exultantly as the winning of a great battle.* The Allied bombing of German

* Untrue, indeed the reverse of the truth. "Why I wrote so false a statement, I don't know," I wrote later. "There was no evidence for it: the intoxication of rhetoric must be my only feeble excuse." Another excuse was that I failed to make a crucial distinction (that others also often fail to make) between the *death camps* (as: Maidanek, Auschwitz, Oswiecim) and the *concentration camps* (as: Buchenwald, Dachau, Sachsenhausen). The latter existed through the Hitler regime; the death rate in them was very high, but their aim was to terrorize, torture, and demoralize the prisoners, and also, during the war, to exploit their labour, rather than just to kill them. Their existence was no secret—the Nazis indeed took care to let the Germans know about them—in general, not in revolting detail—as a means of intimidating opposition. They could not have been kept secret anyway, since they were all in Germany itself and since, up to 1940, their prisoners were all Germans. But the death camps were mostly in Poland, and they "processed" only Jews, most of them Polish, and other non-Germans. So they could be kept secret, and they were. Only Germans with very good connections with the high Army staff ever learned of their existence. For their aim was simply to kill all the Jews, male and female, adults and children, for no alleged political or criminal offences, but just because they were Jews. And this aim would have disgusted and shocked everybody, in Germany or out of it, except fanatical Nazis.

The blueprints for "mobile gas chambers" (closed trucks specially equipped to asphyxiate people) were approved by Hitler in the fall of 1941, and the first units began operating in occupied Russian territory in the spring of 1942. The first death camps were opened in the fall of 1942 and operated to the fall of 1944, when Himmler closed them down, without telling Hitler, as part of his preparations to open negotiations with the Anglo-Americans, behind Hitler's back, for a truce. Rumours began circulating about the mobile gas chambers and later the death camps in 1942,

cities killed many innocent civilians (though not as many as a single one of the German death camps), but there was at least this much humane rationality about it: that it was thought necessary to the winning of the war, which in turn was thought necessary to the self-preservation of the Allied nations. Furthermore, some kind of an argument could be made that it *was* necessary. But the extermination of the Jews of Europe was not a means to any end one can accept as even plausibly rational. The Jews constituted no threat to their executioners; no military purpose was served by their extermination; the "racial theory" behind it is scientifically groundless and humanly abhorrent and can only be termed, in the strictest sense of the term, neurotic. The Jews of Europe were murdered to gratify a paranoiac hatred (as the robot bomb was christened "V" for "Vengeance"), but for no reason of policy or advantage that I can see.*

Or consider the Stalin regime's massacres, the only other ones of our day which have been on the Nazi scale. In Russia today there is much less respect for human life and less ideological resistance to acts of violence on a mass scale than there is in the bourgeois democracies. Yet even here, there is at least the justification for, say, the State-induced famine of 1932 that it represented the carrying out, by brutal and abhorrent means (which of course corrupted the ends—but that is another story)

and the British Foreign Office almost certainly was informed by Moscow about the camps early in 1943. *The Black Book of Polish Jewry* appeared that year, with sensational reports of the camps. But precisely because the whole thing *was* so sensational, so beyond all Western experience—indeed beyond good and evil, as the acts of an insane person are juridically recognized to be—these reports for some time were simply not believed. There are even many stories of Jews who were warned but refused to believe it, and dutifully reported for shipment to Maidanek. It was not till the summer of 1944 that the non-German world began to believe it, and if some Germans then heard about the death camps from Allied broadcasts, what wonder if they discounted it as enemy "atrocities stuff"? But most were not even that much informed. Best source on the death camps is Leon Poliakov's *Breviary de la Haine*, Paris, 1951. (1953)

* This statement provoked much dissent at the time, but I have become more and more convinced of its truth, especially after reading Hannah Arendt's brilliant and profound *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt Brace, 1951). (1953)

of an agricultural policy whose aim was to increase productivity. This may not be a good end in itself, but it is certainly not a bad one. It is, in any case, rational. And the kulaks were starved incident to this aim, not because there was any desire to exterminate them in themselves. It may be said, justly, that it makes little difference to the dead kulak or to the dead Jew what the motives of his executioners were. But it makes a great deal of difference to the executioners, and to our evaluation of their act.*

To put it briefly: the English mill-owners in the last century and the Russian bureaucrats in this one showed a disregard for human life which was shocking enough. But the Nazis have not *disregarded* human life. They have, on the contrary, paid close attention to it. They have taken it for the pure, disinterested pleasure of taking it. There was no ulterior motive behind Maidanek, no possible advantage to its creators beyond the gratification of neurotic racial hatreds. What has previously been done only by individual psychopathic killers has now been done by the rulers and servants of a great modern State. This is something new.

We now come to the question: who is responsible for these horrors?

2. GERMAN ANTI-SEMITISM IS NOT A "PEOPLE'S ACTION"

If we can conceive of a modern people as collectively responsible in a moral sense at all, then it must be held accountable only for actions which it takes spontaneously and as a whole, actions which are approved by the popular *mores*. It cannot be indicted for things done by sharply differentiated sub-groups.

How does this apply to the Germans and the Jews? It is true there was and is widespread anti-Semitism in Germany, as in this country. But anti-Semitism is one thing and violent persecution of Jews is another. If the German people as a whole had approved of the Nazis' Jewish policy, one would expect that

* I now think I overestimated the rationality of Stalin's policy. At first it was more rational than Hitler's, but the dynamic of totalitarianism seems to lead towards irrationality, and by 1945 there was less to choose between the two horrors, in this respect, than I then thought. (1953)

between 1933 and the present, a period in which the Nazis used the State power to place the Jews outside the pale of legality and indeed of humanity itself, there would have been many mob attacks on Jewish institutions and individuals. Actually, as far as I can recall, the American press reported none. And I remember distinctly that in 1938, when the Nazis took advantage of the assassination, by a Jew, of their Parisian diplomatic agent, Vom Rath, to intensify the anti-Jewish terror in Germany, the press reports stressed that there was very little hostility shown by the street crowds against the Jews. The controlled German press was filled with incitements to anti-Jewish violence. Storm troopers and SS men arrested thousands of Jews with great publicity, wrecked Jewish stores, burned synagogues; but the crowds that watched these organized atrocities were silent and withdrawn when they did not venture to express their disapproval. There were many more cases reported of Germans who dared to help Jews than of those who helped the Nazi pogromists—and this, too, in papers like the *N. Y. Times* which were not at all friendly to Nazi Germany.

In contrast, the constant and widespread acts of violence against Negroes throughout the South, culminating in lynching, may be considered real “people’s actions”, for which the Southern whites bear collective responsibility. As Dollard showed in *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, the brutality with which Negroes are treated is not the work of a differentiated minority or of individual sadists but is participated in, actively or with passive sympathy, by the entire white community.

White aggression against Negroes and the social patterns which permit it are forms of social control. They are instrumentalities for keeping the Negro in his place and maintaining the supraordinate position of the white caste. . . . It must not be supposed that the major or perhaps even the most significant part of white aggression against Negroes consists of the few dramatic acts of lynching featured in the newspapers. *Massive and continuous pressures of other types are far more important in achieving social stability.* (My italics.)

So too with the 1943 Detroit race riot, in which hundreds of Negroes were killed or horribly beaten up by large mobs of whites, in the very heart of the city. This kind of behaviour has the general support of the Southern white people, and has enough popular support even in a Northern city like Detroit to allow it to be carried out without interference from the police. This latter point suggests that whereas anti-Negro violence in America is a real "folk" activity, carried on *against* the State and its police (which, of course, wink at it), in Germany it is the reverse: pogroms are carried out by the State and the forces of "law and order" *against* the folkways.*

But *someone* killed the Jews of Europe? And those who did were Germans. True. But a particular kind of Germans, specialists in torture and murder, whom it would be as erroneous to confuse with the general run of Germans as it would be to confuse the brutality-specialists who form so conspicuous a part of our own local police force (and who occasionally burst out in such sensational horrors as the Chicago Memorial Day massacre) with the average run of Americans. It is of capital significance that the death camps for Jews and the mass killings of Russian prisoners of war have apparently not been entrusted to regular German Army units but rather to specially

* This is, I think, one of my shrewdest points. But I must add that the Negroes have made remarkable gains since 1945: Jim Crow segregation in the armed forces has been largely abolished; the Supreme Court for the first time has begun to enforce the 14th and 15th Amendments and even the Civil Rights Acts of 1866, 1870, and 1875, so that the whole structure of "white supremacy" in the South is cracking, and Negroes are *beginning* to vote in large numbers, to be admitted to hitherto all-white Southern universities, and to travel unsegregated on interstate trains. Lynchings have become very rare (sometimes a whole year goes by without one, as against the old days when several hundred Negroes died annually "*pour encourager les autres*"), and several cases have arisen in which white men have actually been punished for murdering Negroes. These post-1945 advances toward racial equality have come about because a more determined assertion of their rights by Negroes has coincided with a less determined denial of those rights by the whites, who now show a (belated) bad conscience that may be somewhat connected with the necessity for a united nation to face the Nazi and now the Soviet threat. There is still plenty of "folk activity" against Negroes, as the recent episode in Cicero, Ill., showed, but on the governmental level there has been a notable improvement since 1945. (1953)

selected and trained SS squads. The Swedish journalist, Avid Fredborg, for example, has this interesting description in his book, *Behind the Steel Wall*:

SS soldiers forming the execution squads in the East are carefully chosen. They are recruited from the most brutal elements and are gradually trained to become harder and more ruthless. At first they may only have to take Jews out for street cleaning and snow shovelling. After a time they are assigned to perform single executions. Only after this training is completed are they ordered to do mass executions.

Many have refused to take part in these and have been shot. . . . Others have had nervous breakdowns and have been sent to asylums. Even the most hardened have at times caved in. Time and again, physicians have been called to attend soldiers on leave who have had severe attacks of hysteria or prolonged insomnia or delirium tremens (soldiers in the firing squads often get intoxicated before executions, and many stay so continually). . . .

The chief instrument for these ghastly practices is the SS. Sometimes it seems that the SS is driving the policy beyond the intention of the Party leaders. In any case, it is certain the German public has little real knowledge of what is going on.

Bruno Bettelheim's article on Nazi concentration camp life in the August, 1944, issue shows in detail how, *given complete control over the individual*, it is possible to condition even anti-Nazis to accept Nazi values. Major Applegate's little treatise, *Kill—or Be Killed* [see page 51 in this volume], indicates that it is not only the Nazis who are consciously trying to break down the civilized individual's inhibitions against taking life.

But if the Nazis can thus condition their SS men and their concentration-camp prisoners, cannot they—and have they not in fact—so conditioned the German people as a whole? To some extent, of course they can and have, especially in the case of the youth. Hitler said in 1937:

"We still have among us old-fashioned people who are not fit for anything. They get in our way like cats and dogs. But

this does not worry us. *We will take away their children.* We will not permit them to lapse into the old way of thinking. We will take them away when they are ten years old and bring them up in the spirit of nationalism until they are eighteen. They shall not escape us. They will join the Party, the SA, the SS and other formations. Later on they will do two years of military service. Who shall dare say that such a training will not produce a nation?"

But we must remember that the great majority of present-day Germans were adults when Hitler came to power, and that even what the Nazis called their "conquest of youth" (a revealing phrase, by the way) is not complete, judging from reports of executions of university students. More important, it would seem probable that the kind of extreme *behaviour* required of mass-executioners and torturers can only be psychologically conditioned by extreme *situations*, as Bettelheim calls them, involving either complete physical control of the individual in a prison camp or else his willing co-operation in a lengthy and rigorous training process. Neither of these conditions is possible in the case of the average German: eighty million people, or even ten or five million can neither be subjected to concentration-camp control nor can they be put through any elaborate training course (even if they consented to be). Propaganda and force are not adequate substitutes for the more intimate types of conditioning; their effect is weakened and even negated constantly by the family and working life of the individual, which goes on still along the traditional lines of Western civilization.*

Nazi Germany is often called "one big concentration camp", but one should not forget that this is a metaphor and not a literal description. Misled by the metaphor, some *Politics* readers have drawn from Bettelheim's article, for instance—the unwarranted conclusion that the whole German population—and even that of the occupied Europe of 1940–1943, which journalists also

* Stalin's regime has gone much further toward subjecting the whole population to "extreme situations" by "concentration-camp control" and "the more intimate types of conditioning" than Hitler's did. Morally, this makes the Russian people no more "responsible" than the German people were, but practically it does present a problem that, however painful, must be faced up to by pacifists and other men of good will. (1953)

have called "one big concentration camp"—was being conditioned by the Nazis as effectively as the prisoners Bettelheim writes about. The fallacy in the case of Europe is apparent at a glance: as "Gallicus" showed (*Politics*, January 1945), the Nazis failed to make much impression even on the youth, and soon found themselves confronted by an overwhelmingly hostile population—and, worse, corrupted by it. In Germany itself, the Nazis obviously could make more progress, since the German people were offered superior material rewards and since national hatred of a foreign conqueror was not involved. But even there it seems unlikely that propaganda and terrorism applied to a population still working and living in comparative (by concentration-camp standards) freedom have been sufficient to effectively Nazify a people the majority of whom were definitely anti-Nazi when Hitler assumed power in 1933. The very fact that concentration camps have continued to exist on a large scale is one proof of a continued popular opposition to Nazism, as are the scores of executions for "treason" which are still announced daily.*

* A wrong inference, I now believe. Perplexing though it is, the fact seems to be that, as Hannah Arendt writes (p. 379): "Terror increased both in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany in inverse ratio to the existence of internal political opposition, so that it looks as though political opposition had not been the pretext of terror (as liberal accusers of the regimes were wont to assert) but rather the last impediment to its full fury." Viz.: the Nazis killed six million Jews not when they were fighting to consolidate their power in 1933-6 but in 1942-4, when they had long since destroyed effective opposition, when the Jews offered no threat to them at all, and when the German people were forced to back them in the war as a matter of national survival. And viz.: Lenin's "Red Terror" of 1918-20, when internal opposition was still strong and the Red Army was fighting defensively on Russian soil against a half dozen invading armies, was minuscule compared to the terror Stalin unleashed in 1937-9, years after forced-collectivization had crushed the peasants into shape, the first Five Year Plan the workers, and Stalin's intra-party tactics the Old Bolsheviks (the Moscow Trials were merely the juridical ratification of a *fait* long ago *accompli*). In more normal or at least familiar kinds of societies, even dictatorships like Peron's or Mussolini's, repression is used to overcome resistance. In the irrational world of totalitarianism, it is sometimes so used (executions soared after the 1944 attempt on Hitler's life), but in general it increases as the opposition weakens, since the rulers are chiefly concerned not with just keeping their power but with a laboratory experiment in changing men into bundles of conditioned reflexes. (1953)

3. THINGS HAPPEN TO PEOPLE

All this is not to deny that Nazism has had a great effect on the German people. It is simply to deny that this effect has as yet changed the average German's attitude enough to cause him to commit pogroms or to approve of them when his Nazi rulers commit them; and to indicate the limitations on Nazi indoctrination outside the concentration camp and the special training schools. The Germans have been changed by Nazism, but it has been a slower process and has gone less far than concentration-camp analogies would suggest, and certainly less far than our town Teutonophobes claim.*

It is a process, furthermore, which is also going on in our own society, in England, and in Russia—in the last-named perhaps † even faster and farther than in Germany itself. Modern society has become so tightly organized, so rationalized and routinized that it has the character of a mechanism which grinds on without human consciousness or control. The individual, be he "leader" or mass-man, is reduced to powerlessness *vis-à-vis* the mechanism. More and more, things happen TO people.

Some examples, mostly drawn from the "democratic" side in this war, may suggest what I mean:

A. The *New Yorker* of August 12, 1944 ran a profile of a 22-year-old lieutenant in the Army Air Force who had just completed thirty bombing missions in the European theatre. He seemed to be of superior intelligence, not politically radical; his main personal interest was in jazz music. "Whatever I tell you,"

* The more virulent of them, like Vansittart and Rex Stout, have concocted a theory of German "responsibility" which is just the reverse of the one discussed here: that the German people, far from having been conditioned to Nazi attitudes by external pressure (which of course implies they were decent people *before* Hitler), have been warlike barbarians throughout European history. This is such an obvious inversion of Nazi racial theory, and is so wide open to the same scientific refutations that it does not seem worth wasting any more space on it here. Combating it is a task for the propagandist, not for the analyst: like the Nazis' ideas on the Jewish people, it is as easy to refute on the scientific plane as it is difficult to combat on the psychological level. It seems more fruitful here to discuss a more sophisticated and tenable theory of German collective responsibility.

† I would now delete this word. (1953)

he said to the interviewer, "boils down to this: I'm a cog in one hell of a big machine. The more I think about it, and I've thought about it a lot lately, the more it looks as if I'd been a cog in one thing after another since the day I was born. Whenever I get set to do what I want to do, something a whole lot bigger than me comes along and shoves me back into place. It's not especially pleasant, but there it is." The lieutenant's personal aspirations would seem modest and attainable enough: to live with his wife, to have a home, to play and hear good jazz. Our society has been unable to give him these satisfactions. Instead, it puts him in the plexiglass nose of a bomber and sends him out to kill his fellow men and destroy their homes, at the most terrible psychological cost to himself, as the profile makes clear. Society is not ungrateful, however: the lieutenant wears the Purple Heart, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal with three oak-leaf clusters.

B. At the Mare Island, California, naval base last summer two munitions ships blew up while they were being loaded. In a twinkling, the blast levelled everything for miles around and killed some three hundred sailors. The next day, the admiral in charge issued an Order of the Day in which he paid tribute to the "heroism" and "self-sacrifice" of the dead.

Now obviously the men who were killed were killed because they happened to be around when the explosives went off, and not because of any decision or action of their own. (So, too, civilians die in air raids; and so, too, nine out of ten soldiers die in a modern battle because they happen to be around when a bomb or shell lands.) The dead had no choice but to be "heroic", in the admiral's concept of heroism: TNT offers no surrender terms. These particular sailors had not even a choice about being around so dangerous a neighbourhood: they were mostly Negroes, and they were assigned to this dirty and dangerous work because of their race (about which they had had no choice either). Indeed, they most definitely did not want the job. The fifty Negro sailors who were recently convicted and sentenced to long prison terms for mutiny were all employed at Mare Island unloading munitions and most of them were survivors of last summer's blast. They felt so strong

a disinclination, after the tragedy, towards sharing their dead comrades' "heroic" fate that they risked a possible death penalty for mutiny.

The admiral's Order of the Day was thus a fantastic distortion of reality. Yet the administrative reflex which prompted him to issue it was sound. Instinctively, he felt it necessary to give to something which was non-purposive and impersonal a *human* meaning, to maintain the fiction that men who die in modern war do so not as chance victims but as active "patriots", who heroically *choose* to sacrifice their lives for their countries. It was his misfortune that the Mare Island explosion did not even superficially lend itself to this purpose. It is the good fortune of our war correspondents that battle deaths can be given at least a superficial plausibility along these lines.

C. The people of London are constantly being applauded for their "heroism" by war propagandists, and doubtless many individual Londoners did show heroic qualities during the bombing raids. But others doubtless also showed mean and cowardly traits. Insofar as the concept of heroism can be applied, it must be used on an individual, not a collective basis. But when journalists salute the "heroism" of the Londoners or of the Russian people—they really mean a kind of collective heroism which can never exist actually, since as a collectivity the people of London had no alternative except to endure the bombings. As a Cockney retorted to a war correspondent: "Everyone's sticking it? And just what the bloody hell do you think anyone can do? You'd think we had some bloody choice in the matter!"

D. Perhaps the most heavily bombed community in this war is the strategic British-held island of Malta, which in a 28-month period had 2,315 air-raid alerts, or an average of three a day. One in 200 of the civilian population died during these raids. Some time ago the British Government awarded a collective George Cross to the people of Malta for their "heroism"

which, once more, consisted in simply enduring what they had to endure, since their British masters would not have allowed them to leave the island anyway. And only the other day the same Government issued a booklet on the "Siege of

Malta" full of the usual nonsense, on which the N. Y. *Times* commented with the usual idiocy: "The island remained unconquered, a light and a symbol."

An incident reported in *Time* of August 7, 1944 illuminates the myth of Malta. It seems that on July 14, 1943, a British army captain caught a Maltese citizen looting his parked car. He took him to the Maltese police, who promptly freed the thief and put the captain in jail—for false arrest. When it appeared that the Maltese authorities planned to keep the captain in jail indefinitely, his commanding officer appealed to the British Governor (without result) and finally direct to London. The British Government replied that "in view of the present tense relations with the Maltese population and urgent military necessities, it is impossible to intervene". The captain remained in solitary confinement for nine months, until April 1944, when his case came up in a Maltese civil court. He was then sentenced to thirteen *additional* months imprisonment at hard labour. Lord Gort, the British Military Governor, ventured to reduce the sentence, on appeal, to three months.

"We walk on tiptoe in Malta," explained an English officer. "We dare not cross a Maltese citizen in any way. Military experience demands appeasement of the pro-Fascist population." Whether the Maltese are pro-Fascist or anti-British or both is not the present point. The thing is that the collectively decorated people of "heroic Malta" detest their British "allies". We may be sure that the British don't allow their army officers to be treated this way by "natives" unless there are compelling reasons.

E. With their customary thoroughness, the Germans have carried what might be called "collective irresponsibility" to its logical extreme. To cope with the Anglo-American armies poured into France after D-Day, they impressed great numbers of Poles, Russians, Frenchmen, Italians, Czechs, Georgians, Mongolians—most of them war prisoners given a choice between starvation and service in the Reichswehr. In some German regiments, the colonel needed an interpreter to make his commands understood. Even crack SS divisions were filled out with these foreign conscripts, all of whom, even the Mongolians, were

officially listed as "Volksdeutsche". The Allies in France found themselves confronted by a veritable International in Reichswehr uniforms. Many of these "Volksdeutsche" shot their officers and came over to the Allied side at the first chance, giving our High Command a typical modern problem. Were they allies? (But they wore the German uniform.) Or were they prisoners? (But they hated the uniform they wore.) All that could be said with certainty is that they were fought on the German side. The passive verb is intentional: the modern soldier does not "fight"; he "is fought", like a battleship or other inanimate mechanism.*

The following story was related by George Orwell in his column in the October 13, 1944 *London Tribune*:

Among the German prisoners captured in France there are a certain number of Russians. Some time back two were captured who did not speak Russian or any other language that was known either to their captors or their fellow-prisoners. They could, in fact, only converse with one another. A professor of Slavonic languages, brought down from Oxford, could make nothing of what they were saying. Then it happened that a sergeant who had served on the frontiers of India overheard them talking and recognized their language, which he was able to speak a little. It was Tibetan! After some questioning he managed to get their story out of them.

* The Communist soldier also "is fought". At this writing, the Korean truce negotiations have been hung up for a year on the issue of whether prisoners shall be forcibly repatriated. The Communists insist they shall be; the U.N. that they be allowed to choose whether to go back or not. The firmness of the U.N. position may be partly due to memories of the shameful forced repatriation of Russian prisoners by the West in 1945-6. This was one of the dirty deals at Yalta between Stalin and Roosevelt, and it was dishonourably honoured by the West until the political break with Russia in the fall of 1946. British and American M.P.'s (who "were fought" also by their commanders) performed the noble work of herding and dragging Russian prisoners—some of whom cut their throats rather than return into trains to be shipped back to the land of socialism, where they were punished because (a) they had been taken prisoner, and (b) they were assumed to be "unreliable elements", since they had lived beyond the Iron Curtain and so had a standard of comparison with conditions in Soviet Russia. (1953)

Some years earlier they had strayed over the frontier into the Soviet Union and been conscripted into a labour battalion, afterwards being sent to western Russia when the war with Germany broke out. They were taken prisoner by the Germans and sent to North Africa; later they were sent to France, then exchanged into a fighting unit when the Second Front opened, and taken prisoner by the British. All this time they had been able to speak to nobody but one another, and had no notion of what was happening or who was fighting whom.

It would round the story off neatly if they were now conscripted into the British Army and sent to fight the Japanese, ending up somewhere in Central Asia, quite close to their native village, but still very much puzzled as to what it is all about.

4. POLITICAL ANIMISM—THE THEORY OF THE “ORGANIC STATE”

The above instances suggest that the difference between “civilized” and “primitive” social organization is growing less. The great circle is slowly closing, and a contemporary Soviet or German citizen would feel more in common with an Australian bushman in many ways than with, let us say, a French *philosophe* of 1870 or a Jeffersonian democrat of 1810. In place of the rigid, unexamined customs which determine the individual’s behaviour in primitive communities, there is substituted today a complex politico-economic organization which is equally “given” and not-to-be-criticized in its ultimate aims and assumptions, and which overrides with finality the individual’s power of choice.

The parallel goes farther. As primitive man endowed natural forces with human animus, so modern man attributes to a nation or a people qualities of will and choice that belong in reality only to individuals. The reasons are the same in both cases: to reduce mysterious and uncontrollable forces to a level where they may be dealt with. The cave-dweller feels much more comfortable about a thunderstorm if he can explain it as

the rage of someone like himself, only bigger, and the urban cave-dwellers of our time feel much better about war if they can think of the enemy nation as a person like themselves, only bigger, which can be collectively punched in the nose for the evil actions it collectively chooses to do. If the German people are not "responsible" for "their" nation's war crimes, the world becomes a complicated and terrifying place, in which understood social forces move men puppet-like to perform terrible acts, and in which guilt is at once universal and meaningless. Unhappily, the world is in fact such a place.

One of the reasons anthropology is so interesting to the politically-minded today is because its method of observation, already used successfully on primitive societies, can be applied very usefully to contemporary society, and is already being so applied by Dollard, Benedict, the Lynds and others. May we not, indeed, expect some future historian to write of us as one scholar has written of the ancient Hebrews:

They explained nearly all phenomenon by the direct action of superhuman and invisible persons and powers, resembling the human spirit. Like the 'primitives', they recognized no essential difference between the spiritual and the material. Like them, too, they conceived of a solidarity, or more accurately, a practical identity, between many beings, events and things which we regard as absolutely distinct.

This animistic confusion marks the common man's thinking (with plenty of help from his political rulers) not only on relations between nations but also on the relation between the State and the individual citizen. Precisely because in this sphere the individual is most powerless in reality, do his rulers make their greatest efforts to present the State not only as an instrument for *his* purposes but as an extension of *his* personality. They have to try to do this because of the emphasis on the free individual which the bourgeois revolution has made part of our political assumptions (for how long?).

Hegel, who developed an anti-individualist theory of Statism while the cannons of the Napoleonic wars were still echoing, saw the problem clearly and tried to meet it in such terms as these:

In the State, everything depends upon the unity of the universal and the particular. In the ancient States, the subjective purpose was absolutely one with the will of the State. In modern times, on the contrary, we demand an individual opinion, an individual will and conscience. The ancients had none of these in the modern sense; the final thing for them was the will of the State.* While in Asiatic despotisms the individual had no inner self and no self-justification, in the modern world man demands to be honoured for the sake of his subjective individuality.

The union of duty and right has the twofold aspect that what the State demands as duty should directly be the right of the individual, since the State is nothing but the organization of the concept of freedom. The determinations of the individual will are given by the State objectivity, and it is through the State alone that they attain truth and realization. . . .

To the complete State belongs, essentially, consciousness and thought. The State knows thus what it wills, and it knows it under the form of thought. . . . The State must be regarded as a great architectonic edifice, a hieroglyph of reason, manifesting itself in reality. . . . That the State is the self-determining and the completely sovereign will, the final decision being necessarily referred to it—that is easy to comprehend. (Hegel: *The Philosophy of Law*.)

We may be sure, at any rate, that Stalin—or Roosevelt—would find these animistic formulations of the great philosopher of modern reaction “easy to comprehend”. Nor would they be at all fazed by another passage in the same essay:

* Hegel fails to mention the great and shining exception: the Greeks, who, to Plato’s disgust, were individualistic and democratic to what today would be considered an insane degree. They found The State sometimes boring, sometimes absurd, and sometimes hateful, but never worthy of a man’s respect. For an informative, learned, witty, and fascinating account of these curious folk, to whom we are still indebted for most of the few decent and agreeable aspects our culture still retains, see H. D. F. Kitto’s *The Greeks* (Penguin Books). There were only a few hundred thousand of them, and their society lasted only a century or so, but never in history have so many owed so much to so few. (1953)

The people without its monarch and without that whole organization necessarily and directly connected with him is a formless mass, which is no longer a State. In a people, not conceived in a lawless and unorganized condition, but as a self-developed and truly organic totality—in such a people, sovereignty is the personality of the whole, and this is represented in reality by the person of the monarch.

Will, consciousness, conscience, thought, personality—these are the attributes of the Hegelian State, the whole theory culminating in the “person of the monarch” as the symbol and expression of the “organic totality”. The “responsibility of peoples” is direct and all-embracing, according to such a theory.

“Lives of nations,” said Roosevelt in his 1940 Inaugural Address, “are determined not by the count of years, but by the lifetime of the human spirit. The life of a man is three-score years and ten. . . . The life of a nation is the fulness of the measure of its will to live. . . . A nation, like a person, has a body. A nation, like a person, has a mind. . . . A nation, like a person, has something deeper, something more permanent. . . . It is that something which matters most to its future, which calls for the most sacred guarding of its present.”

5. IF EVERYONE IS GUILTY, NO ONE IS GUILTY

From the “Organic State” conception, it follows that no individual citizen or group of citizens may think or act otherwise than in accordance with the policies laid down by those in control of the State apparatus. When cells in a biological organism cut loose from their organic function, the result is cancer. Similar behaviour by the citizen-cells of the Organic State is political cancer. The old Roman fable of the belly and the members by which the patricians defended their position against the plebs is still the basic argument of the “organicists”.

In an organism, obviously no line can be drawn between the whole (the nation, or the people) and the parts (the individual citizens, the specific classes, and interest-groups). The hands

that strangle are no more guilty than the belly which nourishes them; the specialized "Jew-killing experts" are no more guilty than the peasants who raise the food they eat or the metal-workers who forge their instruments.

Thus the theory is convenient for those in power on two scores: internally, it preserves the ladder of hierarchy, making rebellious behaviour treason not only to those in authority but also to the alleged common interests of everybody, to what is reverently termed "national unity" these days; in time of war, it makes it possible to treat the enemy population as a homogeneous single block, all of them equally wicked and detestable. This second use is what concerns us here: it is the theoretical underpinning of the concept that the German people are responsible for the horrors of Nazism.

But if everyone is guilty, then no one is guilty. The dialectics of this are wonderfully illustrated in an anecdote quoted by Hannah Arendt ("Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility", *Jewish Frontier*, January, 1945) from *PM* of November 12, 1944. An American correspondent interviews an official of a "death camp" who had fallen into the hands of the Russians:

Q. Did you kill people in the camp? A. Yes.

Q. Did you poison them with gas? A. Yes.

Q. Did you bury them alive? A. It sometimes happened.

Q. Did you personally help to kill people? A. Absolutely not. I was only paymaster in the camp.

Q. What did you think of what was going on? A. It was bad at first, but we got used to it.

Q. Do you know the Russians will hang you? A. (bursting into tears) Why should they? What have I done?

What have I done? These words ring true. One feels that the worthy paymaster—imagine the civilization that has produced the job of paymaster in a death camp!—is sincerely outraged by the proposal to hang him for his part in killing several million human beings. What had he done indeed? Simply obeyed orders and kept his mouth shut. It was what he had *not* done that shocks our moral sensibilities. But from the stand-

point of the Organic State he is no more and no less guilty than every other person in Germany and deserves hanging no more and no less. Soldiers must obey their officers, just as citizens must obey the law. Stalin and Roosevelt would certainly not permit their own soldiers to discriminate, on the frivolous grounds of personal conscience, between one military order and another. Harold Denny in the *N. Y. Times* of February 17, 1945 tells about a captured noncom who had witnessed the execution of forty Jewish men, women, and children in Brest-Litovsk. "The only thoughts I had about it," he said, "were that it was ordered from above and that those who ordered it must have had their important reasons. By now we have been educated in such a manner that we no longer discuss given orders but agree to them without question." Asked whether he himself would be capable of carrying out such an order, he replied, after reflection, that he thought he would be, adding: "I cannot say I would have had fun doing it—not the least little bit. It could only be under the compulsion of an order. To volunteer for it, that I could not do."

It is not the law-breaker we must fear today so much as he who obeys the law. The Germans have long been noted for their deep respect for law and order. This foible, which one could smile at as an amiable weakness in the past, has assumed a sinister aspect under the Nazis. One of the most hopeful auguries for the future of this country, with the Permanent War Economy taking shape, is that we Americans have a long and honourable tradition of lawlessness and disrespect for authority.

Only those who are willing to resist authority themselves when it conflicts too intolerably with their personal moral code, only they have the right to condemn the death-camp paymaster. Certainly those who preach, or practise, the Organic State have no such right. (For all that, the Russian authorities, untroubled by such nice points, have probably long since hanged the fellow—while we agonize over the rights and wrongs of the same.) Yet can even *we* really condemn the paymaster? For the Organic State is by no means only an ideological slogan devised by those in authority; it also corresponds to the real arrangement of things in the modern world. The principles on

which our mass-industry economy is built—centralization of authority, division of labour (or specialization of function), rigid organization from the top down into which each worker fits at his appointed hierarchical level—these have been carried over into the political sphere. The result is that, as we have seen above, the individual has little choice about his behaviour, and can be made to function, by the pressure and terror wielded by the masters of the Organic State, in ways quite opposed to any he would voluntarily choose. I have been told that the Nazis created a Jewish section of the Gestapo and that these creatures were much more feared by their fellow Jews than were the regular Gestapo men, since they would never dare take a bribe or show the slightest good nature. There were also Jewish policemen in the Warsaw ghetto, working loyally with the Nazis. We may imagine the pressure against these individuals, and their families, which produced this behaviour. And doubtless some Jews refused to play the role, and took the consequences. But probably not very many, for such Jews were heroes, and there are not many heroes among the Jews or among any other peoples today (except primitive folk like the Greeks and the Poles). Our paymaster was not a hero, and the Russians hanged him for not being one—as they would have hanged him for being one in *their* State.*

With their usual unerring cynicism, the Nazis exploit this moral weakness in the German people—that they are not heroes. The official SS organ recently editorialized:

There are no innocents in Germany. We have not yet met a single German who for political reasons had refused marriage, children, family support, reductions of taxes or paid vacations only because National Socialism had made them possible. On the contrary, they grew fat and stout under the prosperity of National Socialism. They felt no

* Since the war ended, we have had much experience, most of it depressing, in trying to assess criminal responsibility for political crimes. The de-Nazification programme and the Nuremberg Trials got all snarled up in the Responsibility of Peoples. That bewildering concept also transmuted the whole population of Berlin in three years from Nazi beasts to democratic heroes. See Appendix B. (1953)

pangs of conscience at the "Aryanization" of Jewish businesses. They had their full share in the prosperity. And they shouted "Hurrah" to our victories. . . . There were, it is true, lamblike innocents who did not want to declare war upon any country and who did for the German war effort only as much as they had to. But even these did not object to making money from the war or from National Socialism. They liked to ride in their new cars on our new highways and to travel on our "Strength through Joy" excursions. Nobody, after all, has preferred a democratic death to a National Socialist life.

(Editorial in *Das Schwarze Korps*, quoted in the *Neue Volkszeitung*, New York City, for February 10, 1945.)

The *Schwarze Korps*, of course, exaggerates: as we shall presently see, scores of Germans every day "prefer" (at least get—which I admit is not necessarily quite the same thing) a "democratic death" to a "National Socialist life". But, from the Organic standpoint, it is quite true that "no one is innocent". With their customary political logic, the Nazis of late have deliberately tried to involve the whole German people in the moral responsibility for their crimes. In her brilliant article in the *Jewish Frontier*, Hannah Arendt describes this process and its political consequences.

The terror-organizations, which were at first strictly separated from the mass of the people, admitting only persons who could show a criminal past or prove their preparedness to become criminals, have since been continually expanded. . . . Whereas those crimes which have always been a part of the daily routine of concentration camps since the beginning of the Nazi regime were at first a jealously guarded monopoly of the SS and Gestapo, today members of the Wehrmacht are assigned at will to the duties of mass murder. These crimes were at first kept secret by every possible means and any publication of such reports was made punishable as atrocity propaganda. Later, however, such reports were spread by Nazi-organized whispering cam-

paings and today these crimes are openly proclaimed under the title of "measures of liquidation" in order to force "Volksgenossen" whom difficulties of organization made it impossible to induct into the "Volksgemeinschaft" of crime at least to bear the onus of complicity and awareness of what was going on. These tactics resulted in a victory for the Nazis, and the Allies abandoned the distinction between Germans and Nazis. . . .

National Socialism's chances of organizing an underground movement in the future depends on there being no visible signs of distinction any longer, and above all on the victorious powers' being convinced that there really are no differences between Germans.

6. WE, TOO, ARE GUILTY

If "they", the German people, are responsible for the atrocious policies and actions of "their" (in the possessive and possessing sense, again) government, then "we", the peoples of Russia, England, and America, must also take on a big load of responsibility.

We forced defeated Germany, after World War I, into a blind alley from which the only escape was another blind alley, Nazism; this we did by throwing our weight against socialist revolution. After Hitler took power, more or less with our blessing as a lesser evil to revolution, we allowed him to rearm Germany in the hopes we could turn him against Russia, and we used "non-intervention" to aid him and Mussolini to overthrow the Spanish Republic in the "dress rehearsal" for World War II.

In the present war, we have carried the saturation bombing of German cities to a point where "military objectives" are secondary to the incineration or suffocation of great numbers of civilians; we have betrayed the Polish underground fighters in Warsaw into the hands of the Nazis, have deported hundreds of thousands of Poles to slow-death camps in Siberia, and have taken by force a third of Poland's territory; we have conducted a civil war against another ally, Greece, in order to restore a re-

actionary and unpopular monarch; we have starved those parts of Europe our armies have "liberated" almost as badly as the Nazis did, and if we explain that the shipping was needed for our armies, they can retort that the food was needed for *their* armies; we have followed Nazi racist theories in segregating Negro soldiers in our military forces and in deporting from their homes on the West Coast to concentration camps in the interior tens of thousands of citizens who happened to be of Japanese ancestry; we have made ourselves the accomplice of the Maidanek butchers by refusing to permit more than a tiny trickle of the Jews of Europe to take refuge inside our borders; we have ruled India brutally, imprisoning the people's leaders, denying the most elementary civil liberties, causing a famine last year in which hundreds of thousands perished; we have——

But this is monstrous, you say? We, the people, didn't do these things. They were done by a few political leaders, and the majority of Americans, Englishmen, and (perhaps—who knows?) Russians deplore them and favour quite different policies. Of if they don't, then it is because they have not had a chance to become aware of the real issues and to act on them. In any case, *I* can accept no responsibility for such horrors. I and most of the people I know are vigorously opposed to such policies and have made our disapproval constantly felt in the pages of the *Nation* and on the speaker's platforms of the Union for Democratic Action.

Precisely. And the Germans could say the same thing. And if you say, but why didn't you get rid of Hitler if you didn't like his policies, they can say: But you people (in America and England, at least) merely had to vote against your Government to overthrow it, while we risked our necks if we even talked against ours. Yet you Britishers have tolerated Churchill for five years, and you Americans have thrice re-elected Roosevelt by huge majorities.

It is a terrible fact, but it is a fact, that few people have the imagination or the moral sensitivity to get very excited about actions which they don't participate in themselves (and hence about which they feel no personal responsibility). The scale and complexity of modern Governmental organization, and

the concentration of political power at the top, are such that the vast majority of people are excluded from this participation. How many votes did Roosevelt's refugee policy cost him? What political damage was done the Churchill-Labour government by its treatment of India, or by last year's Bombay famine? What percentage of the American electorate is deeply concerned about the mass starvation of the Italians under the Allied occupation? As the French say, to ask such questions is to answer them.

7. THE POLITICAL MEANING OF COLLECTIVE WAR GUILT

The theory of the German people's collective responsibility for Nazi policies not only (1) ignores the deep cleavages between the Nazis and the people, but also (2) cements these cracks up again.

(1) If the theory were correct, one would expect to find the German people following the Nazis' war leadership with docility if not with enthusiasm. Actually, according to official German figures (*N. Y. Times*, December 20, 1944), "People's Courts" executions (mostly involving treason and other offences against the State) rose 5,000 per cent in the first four years of the war: from 99 in 1939 to 1,292 in 1941 to 5,336 in 1943. These figures don't include the death sentences passed in the regular courts, nor the thousands of Germans executed annually without trial by the Gestapo, the Elite Guard, etc. The 1944 figures are unavailable but are probably much higher than 1943: estimates of the executions after last summer's attempt on Hitler's life run into the tens of thousands. "After the proclamation of total mobilization as a link in 'the holy war of the entire people'," writes a neutral correspondent just back from Germany (*N. Y. Times Magazine*, September 24, 1944), "Nazi leaders ordered all Nazis to report immediately to the Gestapo any defeatist utterances. . . . Well above a hundred of my worker friends and their acquaintances have recently disappeared, 'spürlos versenkt'." Facts like these, even if we grant there is little organized opposition to the Nazis inside Germany, suggest the fuel is ready from which might spring the flames of

an anti-Nazi revolution, if the right spark were provided. But it would be difficult to say which dreads such a spark the most, the Nazis or the Big Three.

(2) It is likely that not since 1934 have the Nazis commanded the popular support they have today. Goebbels and Roosevelt are agreed on one thing at least: that the German people's destiny is identical with that of the Nazis. On the one hand, we have the Nazis organizing a popular *maquis* to carry on the struggle against the Allies for years after the war, pointing to the Morgenthau Plan as conclusive evidence of the Jewish plot against Germany, and telling the German people—with the novel advantage that the propaganda is true—that there is no alternative except a fight to the bitter end under Hitler's leadership. On the other hand, we have the Big Three insisting on "unconditional surrender" (a formula, let us note, which was evolved not by the totalitarian Stalin nor the Tory Churchill but by the common man's friend, Roosevelt), proposing to enslave millions of German males, to reduce Germany to a semi-agricultural status, etc. Thus from both sides of the battle-lines, the German people are told that the Nazis' survival is their only hope of survival, that the Nazis *are Germany* (a claim the Nazis have long made but up to now have been unable to get generally accepted).

For one curious result of the "all-are-guilty" line, which is put forward by those who profess the utmost detestation of Nazism, is that it makes Nazism (or its equivalent called by some other name) the logical *post-war* form of regime for defeated Germany. This comes out nakedly if one considers the most fully developed "organic" theory on Germany—that, fittingly enough, propounded by the Nazis' fellow totalitarian regime in Russia. One finds Moscow promoting hatred of Germans as Germans (not only as Nazis) and proposing the most Draconic treatment of Germany after the war, and at the same time encouraging German military nationalism through the Von Seidlitz officers' committee. A contradiction? Only superficially. The "organic" theory leads precisely to the retention of the Nazis and *junkers* as the German people's rulers. The logic: all are guilty; therefore, no one is more guilty than another; therefore,

the Nazis and the *junkers* are no more guilty than their opponents; therefore, if it is convenient—and it *is* convenient—it is permissible to keep the Nazis and *junkers* (except a few that are hung for demonstration purposes) in power. Thus we have Stalin using the generals and Eisenhower using the SS and the Nazi police. “In Germany there will be no fraternization,” proclaimed Eisenhower’s Order of the Day of October 12, 1944. “We go in as conquerors.”* The logical result of this Order was reported in the London *Tribune* of November 24, 1944: “Front-line correspondents report that posters have been put up everywhere in the British and American zones announcing that fifty-two different Nazi organizations are to be disbanded. This figure does not, however, include all Nazi organizations. Some of these have been ordered to their stations

* Eisenhower’s Order of the Day resulted in such edifying scenes as the following, reported by a private in the occupation forces in the September, 1945 *Politics*: “We had finished eating and there was a large amount left over. Children of between six and ten were standing around hoping to catch a morsel. We then proceeded to dig a hole and bury the food.” For, according to the purest form of the Responsibility of Peoples doctrine, no moral distinction is made between children and grown-ups. “Would not the punishment of all Germans inflict needless hardship on millions of German children who can in no way be held responsible for the crimes of their elders?” a man in the audience asked Major Erwin Lessner during a 1945 Town-Meeting-of-the-Air debate between the major and Dorothy Thompson. “Of course it would,” admitted, or rather insisted, the major. “These innocent German children are the potential soldiers of World War III, just as the innocent German children who had been fed after 1918 later served in Hitler’s army and did remarkably well.” Today, General Eisenhower (and doubtless the major too) thinks highly of the German people, since he needs them desperately in his NATO army, and it is a plus and not a minus for German kids that they are “potential soldiers of World War III”. In seven years, the German people have risen from beasts to defenders of democracy, and the Russian people have changed as radically in the reverse direction.

Personally, I find the attitude of Louis XIV more congenial. France was at war with England when the second Eddystone Lighthouse was being built, early in the eighteenth century. A French privateer carried off the builders to France, where they were imprisoned. Louis XIV learned of this action when the French captain applied to him for a reward. *Le Roi Soleil* was indignant. “I am at war with England, not with mankind,” he declared, in the grand manner. And he sent the Eddystone builders back to England with rich presents, thoughtfully filling their prison cells with the French captain and crew. (1953)

and barracks, to await further orders. Among them are the Hitler Youth, the Nazi Police, and the SS." Some all-are-guilty enthusiasts even insist that the German people are so despicable that they *deserve* to be ruled forever by the Nazis! Thus the most extreme anti-Nazism turns into its dialectical opposite.

So much for the effect on the German people of the collective responsibility theory. It is equally disastrous for the Allied peoples. Last summer everyone thought the war in Europe would be over by the fall. The Anglo-Americans had broken out of Normandy and were racing across France in pursuit of the disorganized German armies; the Russians were advancing on all their fronts; an attempt on Hitler's life was almost successful; the popular mood inside Germany was one of panic and loss of confidence in Hitler's leadership. At that moment, it would not have taken much political pressure to pry loose the people from the Nazis and to bring the whole structure down. Instead of applying this pressure, the Allies reiterated the "unconditional surrender" line, embellished with such grace notes as the Morgenthau Plan. They succeeded in convincing the German people, as Hitler's most frenetic orations could not have convinced them, that their only hope was to stand firm behind the Nazis. To make sure the Germans didn't miss the point, the American High Command staged a special demonstration at Aachen, the first sizable German city our troops reached. Aachen was defended by a single second-rate division, reinforced by one SS unit and a few fortress troops. The defenders co-operated splendidly with the attackers: for one week, the city, ringed with American divisions and artillery units, was bombed and shelled. It was finally taken "the hard way", by an all-out infantry assault backed up by tanks and God knows what else. Militarily, not exactly brilliant. But politically sound enough, for the city was reduced to rubble, thousands of its inhabitants were killed (and a good many American soldiers, too), and notice was served on all Germany (and on the Americans) of what was in store for it (and them).

It is not worth wasting printer's ink to prove that, militarily, the "Aachen policy" is inferior to a policy which would split the German people from the Nazis, and that such a policy would

save an enormous number of American, British, and Russian lives. But when have military considerations been allowed to interfere with the more serious business of politics (except, of course, when bestarred generals urge strikers not to interfere with the "war effort")? The Big Three want things to be done in an orderly way, with the masses' properly constituted rulers remaining on top; they don't want any unauthorized popular movements behind their own lines and they don't want them behind the enemy lines either. Only a liberal editor would seriously point out to them that military victory could be had more rapidly by encouraging the internal break-up of Germany. They are well aware of that fact, but, as responsible ruling-class leaders, they are unwilling to abandon their principles for the sake of military expediency.*

"Modern war," wrote Simone Weil, "appears as a struggle led by all the State apparatuses and their general staffs against all men old enough to bear arms. . . . The great error of nearly all studies of war . . . has been to consider war as an episode in foreign policies, when it is especially an act of interior politics, and the most atrocious act of all." (*Politics*, February, 1945.)

The common peoples of the world are coming to have less and less control over the policies of "their" governments, while at the same time they are being more and more closely identified with those governments. Or to state it in slightly different terms: as the common man's *moral* responsibility diminishes (assuming agreement that the degree of moral responsibility is in

* No! No! Marxistical baby-talk! Not a question of "the masses' properly constituted rulers remaining on top" at all; goes much deeper than these antiquated class-war concepts, profound a century ago but now superficial and misleading. The only serious threat to Nazi rule from within Germany during the war came not from the masses, but from the upper class: the conspiracy of generals and Junker aristocrats, plus a couple of liberal politicians, which culminated in the near-assassination of Hitler in August, 1944. The conspirators wanted to overthrow the Nazis and make peace simply because they were (correctly) convinced that Hitler was leading Germany to ruin. They envisaged a capitalist democracy not very different from our own (or from the present Bonn Government, for that matter), and certainly no revolutionary upheaval. Yet the concept of the Responsibility of Peoples, as expressed in Roosevelt's "unconditional surrender" line, was so strong that they got no encouragement or support from the Allies in their effort to destroy Hitler's rule from within. (1953)

direct proportion to the degree of freedom of choice), his *practical* responsibility increases. Not for many centuries have individuals been at once so powerless to influence what is done by the national collectivities to which they belong, and at the same time so generally held responsible for what is done by those collectivities.

Where can the common peoples look for relief from this intolerable agonizing contradiction? Not to their traditional defender, the labour movement. This no longer exists in Russia, and in the two great bourgeois democracies, it has quite lost touch with the humane and democratic ideals it once believed in. Last fall, the British Trades Union Congress endorsed, 5 to 1, a statement that the German people are responsible for the crimes of Nazism; and a few weeks later the CIO convention over here resolved: "The German people must . . . atone for the crimes and horrors which they have visited on the earth." Such international working-class solidarity as once existed has vanished, and the workers of the world, including and especially those of the Soviet Union, are as brutally and rabidly nationalistic—in *their capacity as organized workers*—as their own ruling classes are.

We must look both more widely and more deeply for relief from the dilemma of increasing political impotence accompanied by increasing political responsibility. To our essential humanity and to a more sensitive and passionate respect for our own and other people's humanity.

Harold Denny in the N. Y. *Times* of February 18, 1945, tells the story of a captured SS private. He was a young Ukrainian farmer who was impressed into the SS when the Germans retreated from Russia last summer. Fed up, apathetic, without interest even in tracing his family, he "appears to have no hatreds, no likes and little resentment. . . . To all questions he replies, 'I cannot know anything about that. Everything's so mixed up.' He looks and acts like a man in a profound state of shock." But the Ukrainian-farmer-SS-man had learned one thing, and he gave it as his only value-judgment:

"We are all human beings. If we had peace, if people would work together, they'd perhaps be comrades. But now——."

MASSACRE FROM THE AIR

“**AERIAL BOMBARDMENT** for the purpose of terrorizing the civilian population, of destroying or damaging civilian property not of a military character, or of injuring non-combatants is prohibited.” Thus, Article 28, Part II of the Rules of Warfare adopted by the great powers, including the US (or us), at the 1922 Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armaments. By the time World War II was over, some 500,000 European civilians had died under American and British bombs. (Since only about 300,000 of them were Germans, it is evident that the Responsibility of Peoples, or at least the Punishment of Peoples, had a much wider scope than can be explained by virtuous indignation over the crimes of Hitler. For the 200,000 non-German civilians killed by Anglo-American bombs belonged to the peoples who had been conquered by Hitler’s armies and whom we were “liberating”—in this case, from life itself.)

The Allies’ decision to rely so heavily on strategic bombing (*i.e.*, bombing directed against cities, industrial plants, sea-ports, and workers’ housing—some 3,600,000 German homes were destroyed—as distinguished from tactical bombing, which is used in direct support of military operations on the battlefield) was doubtless due not to wickedness but to a belief in the military effectiveness of such bombing as a means of destroying the enemy’s industry and breaking the morale of his population. How effective it actually was against industry is problematical. It is doubtful if it broke down morale; on the contrary, most evidence suggests the Germans reacted as the people of London did to the great Nazi air-raids: they hated the enemy all the more and felt all the more that their only hope lay in supporting their own leaders. Even if it did damage morale, there was little the Germans could have done about it. As General Montgomery bluntly put it: “Destruction is now going on wholesale. Every single big and little town is being blown up.

. . . German public opinion cannot say they are sick of it. So it's got to go on. If there were any public opinion left, it would rise up and say, 'Finish!' But if any one does rise up, he gets bumped off." (N. Y. *Times*, April 14, 1945.) So it's got to go on, and, according to the theory of the Responsibility of Peoples, the Germans deserved what they got. But we Americans, according to the same theory, have some slight Responsibility ourselves for massacring a half million European civilians.

It is interesting to note that, just as the democracies and not the totalitarian powers developed and used the atomic bomb, so too the British and American air forces relied mostly on strategic bombing, directed against civilians, while the Nazis and the Russians went in more for the relatively more civilized tactical bombing, directed against troops and military installations. This was, of course, not for humanitarian reasons, but partly because the democracies had the industrial production to sustain the vast operations of strategic bombing (the US alone spent some \$43 billions on bombing Germany and occupied Europe), and partly because—at least according to General J. F. C. Fuller in his brilliant and provocative military history of World War II—the totalitarian powers thought in military terms and realized that from the purely military point of view strategic bombing is not worth while. If this be true, and the general makes a *prima facie* case that it is, then our murderous bombing policy must be set alongside Roosevelt's Unconditional Surrender policy, which prolonged the war by many months since it offered no inducement to any group of Germans to try to overthrow Hitler and come to terms with the Allies. The theory behind both policies was that the whole German people, without exception, must be punished as the guilty accomplices of Hitler. In short, to Roosevelt–Churchill, as much as to Hitler, the war was a crusade, a Day of Judgment with heavy bombers in the role of archangels with flaming swords. "The worst thing about crusades," writes General Fuller, "is that their ideological aims justify the use of all means, however abominable and atrocious. Thus though in 1139 the Lateran Council, under penalty of anathema, forbade

the use of the cross-bow 'as a weapon hateful to God and unfit for Christians', it sanctioned its use against infidels." But, of course, the general is a political reactionary and an old-fashioned militarist who thinks that "the object of war is not slaughter and devastation but to persuade the enemy to change his mind."

Apropos this last point, cf. an editorial paragraph I wrote in *Politics* for May, 1944:

Roosevelt's reply to the protest of the American clergymen against saturation bombing of Germany is a curious exercise in logic. "Obviously," writes Presidential Secretary Steve Early, "Obviously the President is just as disturbed and horrified by the destruction of life in this war as any members of the committee. Thousands of people not in uniform have been killed. The easiest way to prevent many others from being killed is to use every effort to compel the Germans and Japanese to change their philosophy. As long as their philosophy lasts, we shall have more deaths, more destruction and more wars. That philosophy has nothing of Christianity in it." Thus we have this interesting syllogism: The Germans' philosophy is not Christian because it is based on death and destruction. Our philosophy is (by implication) Christian. Therefore, the only way to get the Germans to accept our philosophy is to inflict unlimited death and destruction on them. Q. E. D.

From "*The Root Is Man*", 1953.

NOTES ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF KILLING

ONE OF THE things which make it possible for a modern civilian to participate in war without more psychological resistance than he has is the fact that the murderous aspect of war is depersonalized. Most of the killing is done at such long range that the killers have no sense of the physical effects of their attack. It is true that they themselves are often on the receiving end of such attacks, and might be expected to realize what happens to the enemy by analogy with their own experiences, but the ordinary man, perhaps mercifully, is not especially imaginative that way. And anyway, it is one thing to know that one may be responsible for the death and mutilation of invisible people ten miles away or five miles down, and another to cut a man's throat with one's own hands.

Thinking along these lines, one finds three levels of warfare.

Level No. 1: aerial and artillery bombardment, whether of troops or cities; robot bombs, where the principle of indiscriminate blind destruction becomes dramatically clear, although actually robot bombing is no more indiscriminate than the saturation bombing with which the British night raiders obliterate German cities; mines and booby traps, where time as well as space draws a curtain between killer and victim; naval warfare, in which the opposing fleets often cannot see each other. On both the giving and the receiving end, all these types of warfare seem to be as impersonal as a thunderstorm. This kind of killing by remote control makes up the great bulk of modern warfare.*

* "The majority of casualties are now inflicted by artillery fire," writes Colonel Lanza, "and may amount to 80 per cent or more of the total." (See his comment on Napoleon's "Maxims" in *Napoleon and Modern War*, Military Service Publishing Co., \$1.)

A recent dispatch from France gives an idea of the terrible impersonality of this kind of fighting:

Level No. 2 is combat in which soldiers fight against individual and visible antagonists, but separated by distance, which they bridge by firearms. Aerial dogfights, sniping, rifle combat come under this head.* As in No. 1, the killing is done mechanically at long distance, without physical contact. The psychological effects probably resemble those of hunting, which is what it is, with the roles of hunter and hunted being constantly reversed.

On Level No. 3, one kills or cripples another human being by one's own personal efforts, in close physical contact, aided only by a knife, string, club, or other simple tool. Here the essence of war cannot be concealed, and comes out nakedly in a way shocking to the normal Western individual. To perform successfully this kind of killing requires a brutalization far beyond that called for by No. 1 and No. 2. Even within level No. 3 itself, the rule holds: if one has no tool at all but just bare hands, the business of killing reaches its peak of horror so far as the killer is concerned. Thus the psychological and the

"My vantage point was an observation post for saturation artillery that had been pounding Jerry all night and the previous day. The valley stretched away to both flanks like a huge football stadium. An area of about 20 square miles was visible. . . . Spasmodically, like torches, flares would burst on the horizon as the shells found targets.

"At intervals of 20 or 30 minutes, the observation spotters would halt the fire from batteries located four or five miles to the rear. Then in the distance, out from the small forests and hedgerows, would appear a minute figure with a white flag. He would be followed by other small figures almost indistinguishable through the glasses. Another white flag would pop up from the green and soon the column of figures would grow large—20, 30, maybe 60 or 70 marching men carrying 10 to 12 white squares of cloth. They would make the long trek to the American lines with upraised hands.

"When the catch was bagged, the merciless pounding would commence anew. The prisoners protested: 'It's nothing but butchery.'"

N. Y. World-Telegram, August 23, 1944

* Although the popular idea of warfare is still soldiers shooting at each other with rifles, fighting at Level No. 2 is today unimportant, at least from the standpoint of bloodshed. "In 1918," writes Col. Lanza, "only 11 per cent of the casualties occurred from infantry fire; and in 1942 Russian statistics indicated that only 10 per cent were due to this cause. . . . Some infantry soldiers in 1918 belonging to regiments which suffered heavy casualties in the six weeks' campaign in the Argonne, never fired their rifles, for they never saw any enemy to fire at."

statistical aspects of modern war move in opposite directions: the more powerful the weapons the greater the slaughter and the less the killer's consciousness of it. (This is possibly a factor of some importance in the survival of modern warfare as a social institution.)

The above generalizations were suggested by a little book titled *Kill—or Get Killed; a Manual of Hand-to-Hand Fighting*, by Major Rex Applegate (Military Service Publishing Co., Harrisburg, Pa.; \$2). This is a quasi-official manual, for the use of officers in training troops. After reading it, I'm not sure I should not, if pressed, choose the second alternative; there are limits even to self-preservation. The field is covered systematically, with chapters on such topics as "Strangulations" (by stick—"very efficient"; and by cord—"the thinner the diameter, the more instant the effectiveness") and "The Fighting Knife", with a discussion of the more efficient types—"efficient" is a favourite term of the author—and of the relative advantages various parts of the body offer for cutting, stabbing, hacking and ripping.

But much the stiffest chapter, in line with the rule noted above, is the one with the mild title, "Unarmed Offence". Here we learn the most "efficient" methods of eye-gouging ("best accomplished by placing a thumb on the inside of the eye socket next to the nose and flicking the eyeball out towards the edge of the cheek"), lip-tearing ("hook your thumb in the corner of the mouth and tear towards the hinge of the jaw"), sitting-neck-break (best undescribed), ear concussion blow ("approaching your opponent from the rear, you can rupture his eardrums by cupping both hands and simultaneously striking them against his ears"), kicks-to-kill ("After your opponent has been downed, the kill can be made with a kick. . . . It is best to be wearing heavy boots."), and, above all, the proper exploitation of the testicles. The author becomes positively lyrical about these "most vulnerable and sensitive parts of a man's body. . . . Any strong foot or hand blow delivered in the crotch will enable the weakest man to knock the strongest senseless or to disable him to the point where he is

easily finished off by some other means. The strongest holds can be broken at any time by grasping an opponent's testicles and pulling and twisting them."

There is an anatomy of mayhem as well as of healing.

Major Applegate's general rule is simple enough: study the Marquess of Queensberry rules carefully, and then do the opposite. Hit below the belt and always kick a man when he is down (with "heavy boots", if possible). "Ruthlessness is what we seek to achieve. It is best defined in two words: speed and brutality. . . . Forget the rules and use the so-called 'foul' methods." The author recognizes that draftees from civilian life usually have strong prejudices against this sort of thing, prejudices which must be overcome by careful psychological conditioning. "The average American doughboy when shown a fighting-knife for the first time, will have an aversion to its use as a killing implement. This same feeling is apparent in preliminary stages of bayonet training." The situation is by no means hopeless, however. Proper training methods can recondition the soldier until "the killing instinct becomes aroused to the point where he has confidence in the weapon and is not averse to using it".

The chapter describing one of these methods—the operation of a "practical indoor course" for hand-to-hand fighting—reads like the account of a Pavlovian experiment in conditioned reflexes, combined with elements of a parlour game and an Eden Musée. The course is laid out in a basement and consists of a series of rooms, pits, tunnels, and corridors in which dummies and targets, in enemy uniforms, are arranged to appear and disappear, to the accompaniment of various coloured lights and sound effects, as the "student", armed to the teeth, makes his way over the course.

By a combination of shock, fright, and induced rage the subject's civilized inhibitions are broken down and he is conditioned to stab and shoot by reflex action. "There is no limit to the possibilities of this range," writes the author proudly. "The only limitation is the ingenuity of the builder." This is an exaggeration: the British used similar courses in training their commandos several years ago, with additional improvements

such as booby traps, collapsible stairs, and showers of animal blood, but they had to be toned down, apparently because the effect on the students was too severe. Perhaps by World War III, mankind will have progressed far enough to permit the use of these more realistic devices. By World War IV, it may be possible to substitute live prisoners for the dummies.

There is one rather interesting problem in operating the course. Although the writer never states so directly, it would seem there is danger that the student's inhibitions will be broken down so thoroughly that he will shoot or stab the coach who accompanies him. ("Your guide and confessor", as the instruction-sheet issued to the students terms him—a kind of Virgil leading his charge through a sordid Inferno.) The coach is advised to keep himself in a position to grab the student's gun arm "at any instant"; after the three dummies along the course have been stabbed, "the knife is taken away from student to prevent accident"; and finally: "There is no place on course where total darkness prevails while instructor is near student."

The author gets into an ironical conflict between ideology and practicality when he has to admit that the Japanese soldier is in many ways the ideal hand-to-hand fighter. As a patriot, he is inclined to see this as one more proof of Japanese barbarism, but as a technician, he views it in quite a different light. The whole chapter on "unarmed offence" takes off from the Japanese techniques of jiu-jitsu. The Japanese soldier is perhaps the world's most skilful bayonet fighter; he spends almost half his training time at bayonet practice, and practice of a more effective kind than the American soldier usually gets: "Japanese bayonet training is most interesting because the personal element is injected into everything the Japanese soldier does. Three-fourths of the bayonet drill is given over to personal combat between men." As for using the knife, the Japanese soldier generally has his own personal fighting knife, which is handed down from father to son and "revered with all traditional Japanese rites". Finally, to crown his virtues, "The Jap is extremely testicle conscious." The inhibitions about physical cruelty which have been built up in the Western psyche through centuries of Christian morality and bourgeois

humanitarianism are one of the real points of superiority of Western over Eastern culture. (Need it be said that there are equally real points of inferiority?) From the military viewpoint, however, and this is the viewpoint that has come to dominance in our age, this is an element of Japanese superiority, whatever the ideologues say about "Jap barbarism".

BUT this is making a good deal out of a little book on what is, by my own account, a very limited aspect of modern warfare? Listen, then, to the late General McNair, who was until lately in charge of the training of all American troops. Speaking on November 11, 1942, over a nation-wide hook-up, General McNair outlined his philosophy:

Our soldiers must have the fighting spirit. If you call that hating our enemies, then we must hate with every fibre of our being. We must lust for battle; our object in life must be to kill; we must scheme and plan night and day to kill. There need be no pangs of conscience, for our enemies have lighted the way to faster, surer and crueller killing; they are past masters. We must hurry to catch up with them if we are to survive.

Such sentiments are not to be regarded as indicating any personal bloodthirstiness in General McNair, any more than Major Applegate's competent discussion of the best method of gouging out an eye necessarily convicts him of any lack of humane feeling. Quite the contrary, indeed. The more decent human beings one assumes the General and the Major are, the more strongly the point comes out that war is murder on a big scale, and if one's war aims are simply to defeat the enemy, as is the case on both sides in this war, then it is unreasonable (or hypocritical) to boggle over moral issues. There is still a certain apologetic note in statements like General McNair's: our enemies started it; we have to adopt such methods in self-defence; once the enemy is crushed, we can go back to decency. A decade or two of armed "peace", however, with new enemies materializing, new wars taking shape—already Roosevelt has said we can "never" relax our vigilance against future Japanese

attacks—will change all this, and we shall come to accept war and its logical consequences with the same ease with which we now accept the carnage wrought daily in the Chicago stockyards.

THE Army Air Force Medical Corps has developed a new technique for psychiatric treatment called "narcosynthesis", in which the patient is thrown into a "synthetic dream state" by the use of drugs. He then talks freely about the anxieties he represses in a conscious state. (The Freudian theory, by the way, that neuroses are the result of repression, has been remarkably confirmed by psychiatric experience during this war. The chief technique in treating battle neuroses is getting the victim to talk about his experience—and to realize that every soldier is horribly afraid in battle, so that there is no reason to suppress the expression of fear.)

"One of the most amazing revelations derived by our uncovering technique," states a paper read before the American Psychiatric Association on May 16, 1944, by Lt.-Col. R. R. Grinker and Major J. P. Spiegel, "has been the universality of guilt reactions, not only in men who have been removed from combat because of anxiety states but also in those who have successfully and honourably completed their tour of duty." It is immensely significant that these guilt-feelings are apparently connected not, as the civilian would expect, with the slaughter of enemy soldiers and civilians, but rather with the soldier's own comrades. The report continues:

These guilt reactions are related to the most varied, irrational and illogical experiences. A comrade was killed during a mission which he took instead of the patient. . . . We hear often the guilty cry, "I should have got it instead of him." . . . At first, the soldier's love is for his country, but soon he comes to love his outfit, his commanding officer and his friends. . . . He transforms a considerable share of his personal self-love to affection and pride in his outfit by the process of identification, and thus is enabled to overcome many obstacles to the performance of his military duties.

Thus to the process of conditioning described above in considering Major Applegate's treatise, we may add another psychological explanation of how men can endure modern warfare: the identification of the individual soldier with his "outfit" and the loyalty, pride, self-sacrifice, co-operation, and comradeship which this identification brings into play. In some wars, the soldier identifies himself with a great principle: the Rights of Man, revolutionary socialism, the liberation or defence of a nation. These great impersonal political convictions aroused the common soldiers of the French Revolutionary armies and of Trotsky's Red Army to a pitch of fanaticism which swept all before it. In this war, as we shall see below, the complete absence of any such emotion in the ranks of the American armies is the first thing that impresses most observers. Simple group loyalty thus becomes the most important factor in morale. "I've been around war long enough to know that nine-tenths of morale is pride in your outfit and confidence in your leaders and fellow-fighters," writes Ernie Pyle. A *Time* correspondent is even more explicit:

I think men fight for two reasons: (1) ideals; (2) *esprit de corps*. Since we in the United States have done such an abominable job of educating a generation, few of our men fight for things they believe in—they don't know what to believe in. The Marine Corps, which must be the finest organization of fighting men the world has ever seen, does not know what to believe in either—except the Marine Corps. The marines fight solely on *esprit de corps*. (Robert Sherrod in *Time*, December 27, 1943.)

The reason there are not more nervous breakdowns among bomber crews, who are "living beyond their psychological means" much of the time, is partly *esprit de corps* and partly "the strong common love of the plane itself". (Lt.-Col. J. W. Murray, of the Air Surgeon's Office, quoted in *PM*, May 15, 1944.) The airman's fatherland is his plane.

There are thus important psychological offsets to the boredom, horror, and futility which war means to those forced to engage in it. Lt.-Col. Murray, noting that it is impossible to

tell in advance what type of soldier will crack under strain, adds that some draftees who in their civilian life had suffered severe neurotic symptoms get along very well in a military environment. "Army life and combat seem to fulfill important emotional needs and thereby to stabilize these individuals." One of the psychological advantages of army life over the competitive dog-eat-dog environment of capitalist society must be the sense of comradeship and of co-operative effort. Just as war releases the productive energy of industry from the bonds of property and profit, so it also allows expression to some very fine traits of human nature which have little outlet in peacetime society. An army psychiatrist who went along as an observer on a bombing mission, for example, gives a really inspiring picture of men working together:

During the violent combat and in the acute emergencies that arose during it, the crew were all quietly precise on the interphone and decisive in action. The tail gunner, right waist gunner and navigator were severely wounded early in the fight, but all three kept at their duties efficiently and without cessation until the combat was over. . . . The burden of emergency work with the controls, oxygen, wounded men and reparable battle damage fell on the pilot, engineer, and ball turret gunner, and all functioned with rapidity, effectiveness, and no lost motion. . . . The decisions, arrived at with care and speed, were unquestioned once they were made, and proved excellent. In the period when disaster was momentarily expected, the alternative plans of action were made clearly and with no thought other than for the safety of the entire crew. All at this point were quiet, unobtrusively cheerful and ready for anything. There was at no time paralysis, unclear thinking, faulty or confused judgment, or self-seeking in any of them.

The object of all this co-operation, skill, and unselfish, even heroic, behaviour was to blow to pieces other human beings and their homes, in a war whose purposes the bomber crew—if it was typical—didn't believe in and indeed took little interest in. The domination of modern man by his own creations, his

involvement in processes beyond his control and contrary to his desires, the contrast in our society between noble means and ignoble ends, and the dissolution of ends into means, so that the Marines fight for the honour of the Marines—all of this is summed up here.

It would be a cheerless outlook if this were all that can be said about the psychological reactions of men to modern warfare. Fortunately, however, these positive factors which make possible adjustment to war do not as yet seem to be dominant, at least not in the American armies. I have emphasized them because one tends to overlook them and therefore to expect more resistance to the process of war from soldiers than actually takes place. But the big fact is still that among American troops psychological disorders are running at a higher rate than in the last war. Although the army screens out at the induction centres as many potential psychiatric cases as possible—one out of every ten draftees is rejected for psychiatric reasons—the incidence of neuropsychiatric disorders in the Army is *twenty times that in civilian life*, and within the army itself it is *ten times greater in combat areas than in non-combat areas*. A Presidential medical board which examined causes of army rejections last winter was “astonished” and “concerned” at the number of “N.P.” (neuropsychiatric) discharges from the army, “particularly those occurring in the first six months of service”. (*Time*, March 13, 1944.) What worried the Presidential board seems to me, on the contrary, cheering news. I should be concerned if the N.P. rate *failed* to increase sharply within the armed forces. Is it unreasonable to speculate that, blocked from political expression, outraged human nature seeks out this back door, so to speak, of protest?

It is good news, also, that the rate of N.P. rejections is running high. On July 10 last, General Hershey told a Senate committee: “Out of 4 million disqualified, over 1 million draftees were rejected because they were found mentally unfit, and though three-quarters of that number at first sight seemed to be sound, they showed on examination that their emotions were in

such a state that they could not stand modern war." This seems to me a pretty good state to have one's emotions in. No doubt most of the million draftees rejected as "mentally unfit" were neuropsychiatric cases by any standards, but may we not assume that a good proportion of them were simply too sane to fit into the lunatic pattern of total war?

One would expect the degree to which the soldier believes in the war he is fighting to be an important factor in his morale (which is an old-fashioned term for his neuropsychological health). Ardent political convictions can enable the individual to survive experiences he might otherwise crack under. I have seen no studies of this rather delicate question. There is, however, a suggestive passage in the report which Col. Leonard G. Rowntree, chief of the medical division of the selective service system, gave before the American Psychiatric Association on May, 14, 1944. Noting an increase in psychiatric rejections by the army examiners between December, 1942, and December, 1943, Dr. Rowntree added: "The most striking evidence is the marked increase in incidence of psychosomatic disease in the Negro, *who in peacetime appeared relatively immune.*" (My emphasis.) Rejections of Negroes for peptic ulcer, for example, have been running at $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the peacetime rate, while neurocirculatory asthenia ("soldier's heart") doubled for the whole group of draftees (white and coloured) between December, 1942 and December, 1943, but went up *five times* for the Negroes alone. "This may represent the influence of war stress and strain, and to some extent it may also reflect the desire of the registrants to avoid service." Thus the group which above all has the most reason to reject the democratic slogans under which the war is being fought is also the group which shows the greatest increase in psychiatric symptoms when confronted with conscription into the armed forces.

'These psychiatric rejections indicate not only the individual's desire not to enter the army, but also, often, *the army's desire not to accept the individual if he obviously does not want to serve.* From what I gather from people who have been through the army examination routine, as I have not, the doctors usually reject

draftees whose general "attitude", personality or overt statements during the psychiatric examination indicate they may cause "trouble" in the army. And a marked unwillingness to enter the army seems to be regarded, reasonably enough, as threatening future "headaches". Here the authorities confront a nice question of morality vs. expediency. The draftee who clearly wants to avoid service is, of course, a socially reprehensible person, a "draft dodger" psychologically if not legally, who should be punished by being shoved into uniform at once. But this moralistic approach is not expedient, since a single cog with an antagonistic will of its own can cause all sorts of friction in a mass-production machine like the army. So, "for the good of the service", it seems better to keep out such cogs. Thus we get the curious result that individual rebellion is in one sense hopeless but in another effective in causing a degree of friction out of all proportion to its size—and both for the same reason: because the military machine is so big and so well organized. Here we may have an important principle of action against the authorities in control of great totalitarian institutions like armies: the co-operation, whether willing or just submissive, of the individual is necessary if he is to be useful as a slave-citizen or as a soldier. It is just not worth the trouble to punish or to reshape individuals who refuse to fit into the pattern. Here is the last line of battle for the dissenter; he is of no use to the army if his dissent goes deep enough. In the total state, the issue cannot be avoided by "rejecting" the dissenter; there is no area to which to reject him. Prison or the firing squad has to be *its* 4F.

Too great willingness to serve, in some circumstances, may cause the authorities as much worry as too little. The good soldier Schweik found himself in jail, one recalls, when he had himself wheeled to the recruiting office in an invalid's chair, waving his crutches, and shouting "Long live the Emperor Franz-Joseph!" and "On to Belgrade!" That was in Prague in August, 1914, and the Austrian authorities seem to have suspected Schweik's patriotic ardour of a tinge of irony. A more modern instance is the story that is told of a well-known Surrealist painter who escaped military service in Paris at the beginning of this war by excessive manifestations of military

ardour and patriotism when he was called up for service. Entering his draft headquarters, where everyone was plunged in the deepest gloom, he threw out his chest and saluted smartly on all sides, shouting "Oui, mon capitaine!" and "Vive la France!" They rejected him as mentally unbalanced.

September, 1944

MY FAVOURITE GENERAL

(1)

MY FAVOURITE GENERAL is George S. Patton, Jr. Some of our generals, like Stilwell, have developed a sly ability to simulate human beings. But Patton always behaves as a general should. His side-arms (a brace of pearl-handled revolvers) are as clean as his tongue is foul. He wears special uniforms, which, like Goering, he designs himself and which are calculated, like the ox horns worn by ancient Gothic chieftains, to strike terror into the enemy (and into any rational person, for that matter). He writes bloodcurdling poetry apostrophizing the God of Battles. He slaps shell-shocked soldiers and curses them for cowards. When Italian mules obstruct the progress of his staff car, he has them executed on the spot—doubtless with full military protocol, including bandaged eyes (optional). And now he has shown that he can turn even a routine affair like opening a new Anglo-American service club in London into something memorable. "The idea of these clubs," ruminated the general in the presence of reporters, "could not be better because undoubtedly it is the destiny of the English and American peoples to rule the world, and the more we see of each other the better." Once more the general was in the headlines, once more the Army publicity staff wearily got to work. . . . Patton has only two rivals in my affections. One is General MacArthur, also a master of the grand military manner. (MacArthur's literary style is more impressive, but he lacks Patton's punch.) The other is Admiral William F. ("Bull") Halsey, who declared in a recent newsreel interview: "We are drowning and burning the bestial apes all over the Pacific, and it is just as much pleasure to burn them as to drown them," and who whimsically remarked at an "off-the-record" dinner of Washington newspapermen, "I hate Japs. I'm telling you men that if I met a pregnant Japanese woman, I'd kick her in the belly."

Bull is a top-ranking naval officer, which gives him the privilege of talking in public in a way which would get civilians locked up in the violent ward of Bellevue. . . . A few more such generals and admirals, and militarism will be a dead issue in this country.

May, 1944

(2)

THE OTHER DAY I saw a newsreel of General Patton's speech in the Los Angeles Stadium shortly after his return from Europe. Grey-haired and erect, "Old Blood and Guts" had a fine presence: paternal, gruff, a bit diffident, with a warm smile flashing every now and then as he talked. He told of what Germany looks like today from the air, solemnly, with awe: "You cannot imagine such destruction. It was the face of hell." Perhaps I was wrong about Patton, I thought. . . . Then the fatherly voice continued: "After that we flew over the ocean. It was disappointing. There were no Germans to kill down there." And the warm, shy smile spread slowly as he stooped over the microphone, waiting for the laughter and clapping of 70,000 people to subside. A friend whose job is putting together newsreels tells me they had difficulty getting enough footage for exhibition out of this speech of Patton's, it was so full of "god-damn" and other secular expressions. The few minutes of it I heard was thus probably only a mild echo of the real thing.

General Patton made another speech, to the men of his Third Army, on the day before they took off for the landing in Normandy last spring. OWI operatives recorded the historic utterance on the spot and rushed the precious discs across the Atlantic by air, for use at war-bond rallies and other consecrated gatherings. But the speech was never released. For when the records were played over here, with a dozen topflight OWI experts listening, pencils poised, despair settled down over the gathering. Speaking to his men, the good grey general was completely uninhibited (or at least played the part—I suspect Patton's toughness is mostly theatricalism and neuroticism). The four-letter words fell like rain: Molly Bloom and Studs

Lonigan would have blushed. The speech was completely unusable: the general had, in his martial ardour, sabotaged the war effort.

Just what Patton said on D-Day-Minus-One will be known only when the OWI releases the speech; that is to say, will not be known. However, it is possible to construct a reasonable facsimile here, from two sources: an alleged text published by a *N. Y. Daily News* columnist on May 31, 1945, and some notes sent me by a friend who jotted them down from the OWI recordings. The two check pretty well. Patton's speech, shortened for space reasons, ran as follows:

GEORGE PATTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS TO HIS TROOPS

Men! This stuff we hear about Americans wanting to stay out of this war—not wanting to fight—is a lot of bullshit. Americans love to fight, traditionally. All real Americans love the sting and clash of battle. America loves a winner. America will not tolerate a loser. Americans despise a coward. Americans play to win. That's why America has never lost and never will lose a war, for the very thought of losing is hateful to an American.

You are not all going to die. Only 2 per cent of you right here today would be killed in a major battle. Death must not be feared. Every man is frightened at first in battle. If any man says he isn't, he's a goddamned liar. But a real man will never let the fear of death overpower his honour, his sense of duty to his country and to his manhood.

All through your army career, you've bitched about what you call "this chicken-shit drilling". That drilling was for a purpose: instant obedience to orders and to create alertness. If not, some sonofabitch of a German will sneak up behind him and beat him to death with a stocking full of —.

An army is a team. It lives, sleeps, eats, and fights as a team. This individual hero stuff is a lot of crap. The bilious bastards who wrote that kind of stuff for the *Saturday Evening Post* don't know any more about real fighting under fire than they know about —.

Even if you are hit, you can still fight. That's not bullshit either. . . . Every damn man has a job to do. Each man must think not only of himself but of his buddy fighting beside him. We don't want yellow cowards in this army. They should be killed off like flies. If not, they will go back home and breed more cowards. We got to save the women for the fighting men. The brave man will breed more brave men.

Remember, men! You don't know I'm here. . . . Let the first bastards to find out be the goddamn Germans. I want them German bastards to raise up on their hind legs and howl: "JESUS CHRIST! IT'S THE GODDAMNED THIRD ARMY AND THAT SONOFABITCH PATTON AGAIN!"

We want to get the hell over there and clean the goddamn thing up. And then we'll have to take a little jaunt against the purple — Japs and clean them out before the Marines get all the credit.

There's one great thing you men will be able to say when you go home. You may all thank God that thirty years from now, when you are sitting at the fire with your grandson on your knee and he asks you what you did in the Great World War II, you won't have to say: "I shovelled — in Louisiana."

Spengler often refers to the "style" of a period, an essential quality which may be detected in all forms of expression from mathematics to landscape gardening. The above speech, I venture to say, will be considered by later historians as typical of the style of this war as Cæsar's and Washington's and Trotsky's set speeches to their troops were in *their* wars. At once flat and theatrical, brutal and hysterical, coarse and affected, violent and empty—in these fatal antinomies the nature of World War II reveals itself: the maximum of physical devastation accompanied by the minimum of human meaning.

These utterances of Patton's are atrocities of the mind: atrocious in being communicated not to a psychoanalyst but to great numbers of soldiers, civilians, and school children; and atrocious as reflections of what war-making has done to the personality of Patton himself. Patton, it is true, is an extreme case, noted in the Army long before the war for his martial

hysteria. (The racist demagogue, Representative Rankin of Mississippi, recently nominated him for Secretary of War.) But I cannot believe he has not been brutalized by the war. Certainly most of us have. I remember when Franco's planes bombed Barcelona for the first time what a thrill of unbelieving horror and indignation went through our nerves at the idea of hundreds—yes, *hundreds*—of civilians being killed. It seems impossible that that was less than ten years ago. Franco's air force was a toy compared to the sky-filling bombing fleets deployed in this war, and the hundreds killed in Barcelona have become the thousands killed in Rotterdam and Warsaw, the tens of thousands in Hamburg and Cologne, the hundreds of thousands in Dresden, and the millions in Tokyo. A month ago, the papers reported that over one million Japanese men, women, and children had perished in the fires set by a single B-29 raid on Tokyo. One million. I saw no expression of horror or indignation in any American newspaper or magazine of sizeable circulation. We have grown calloused to massacre, and the concept of guilt has spread to include whole populations. Our hearts are hardened, our nerves steady, our imaginations under control as we read the morning paper. King Mithridates is said to have immunized himself against poison by taking small doses which he increased slowly. So the gradually increasing horrors of the last decade have made each of us to some extent a moral Mithridates, immunized against human sympathy.

August, 1945

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF INTELLECTUALS

THE GERMAN PEOPLE have let Max Lerner down. There is no other way to put it—they have failed him and damn near busted his big progressive heart. It seems that Lerner, all dressed up in his War Correspondent's Uniform, was scooting along behind the advancing Ninth Army in his jeep when he came across a large group of German civilians. "It was a drizzly afternoon," he writes (*P.M.*, March 4), "and they were clustered under a cement shed open at one end. There was a woman with a several-weeks-old baby, and there was an old man of 87. Most were men and women in their middle 40's and above, with a scattering of children. They were almost all farmers." They had been hiding in cellars for three days while American guns destroyed their village in the course of "the war that they themselves had brought on". (How "they themselves had brought it on" not specified.)

Descending from his jeep, Lerner asked them: Are You Guilty? He records no reply from the baby, but the others answered that they had never trusted or liked Hitler, that they had always considered the Nazis criminals, and that they were Catholics and hence opposed for religious reasons to Hitler's policies. Why then, asks Lerner with that implacable logic he shows when he is baiting someone who can't hit back, Why then, did you allow the Nazis to do these things? "With one accord they answered that they had yielded to force and to force alone." But this doesn't go down with Lerner; he points out to the shivering, bomb-dazed farmers that the people of France, Belgium, Poland, and Russia didn't yield to German force; so why did they? * This was a blockbuster: "They were silent." (Different interpretations might be put on this silence.) Even after this, some of these simple peasants apparently didn't understand the kind of animal they were dealing with; they had

* According to reliable sources, the above countries were all engaged in a war against Germany.

been accustomed, after all, to the civilized society of hogs. So they asked Lerner to put in a good word for their local police chief, who had used his official post (probably at the risk of his neck) "to shield them from the severity of the Nazi regime". We will omit Lerner's reaction to *that* one.

"I came away heartsick and discouraged," writes Lerner. "The crime of these people was cowardice and moral callousness rather than active criminality. . . . Nowhere did I find the moral strength to face the fact of guilt. Only protests that they were not responsible for what had happened." Even the baby apparently lacked a sense of responsibility for Hitler, which shows how deeply ingrained this moral callousness is in the German national character.

However, Lerner thinks there may be "better material among workers than among the farmers and middle-class". (You can't keep a *P.M.* editor discouraged for long.) "Indications in Aachen are that a substantial section of the working class is possibly salvageable." So—if I may apply logic to Lerner himself—since what discourages him about the Germans is that so many of them deny they were pro-Nazi, the moral superiority of the Aachen workers must reside in the fact that they admit they were not forced to back Hitler but did so of their own free will and are hence responsible for the Nazis' crimes. That the German working class was pro-Nazi thus becomes a source of satisfaction for Lerner. We may be pardoned for reacting to this novel information—hitherto unrecorded in studies of Nazi Germany—with less jubilation.

But Lerner was able to report in the same issue of *P.M.* a happier experience, one that seems to have restored his faith in human nature. He devotes a full page to describing, with a fullness of detail reminiscent of Cholly Knickerbocker, the thrilling visit of TWO SOVIET MAJOR GENERALS to the Ninth Army. These personages were as warming to Lerner's big progressive heart as the German peasants were depressing. They were much better dressed, for one thing: "resplendent uniforms with long field coats of a rich purplish material, tight green trousers and long black boots, and gold stars glittered on their shoulder insignia". Also they were much more Important.

Lerner delightedly reports the trivia of their visit: how a "military crisis" occurred when it was found that General Suslaporov's name was spelled with a "t" instead of a "p"; how one of them "showed a rich command of American slang"; how the other patted a wall map as he passed it (significance not explained). Finally, they were Soviet generals, people's generals, democratic generals, very inspiring generals altogether, generals on the Right Side, the People's Side, the Yalta Side. Yes, they were clearly Max Lerner's kind of people—the progressive, democratic, and victorious people, not like those wretched German farmers with their shabby clothes and shell-wrecked homes and hungry faces and their callous and cowardly refusal to lick the boots of an accredited *P.M.* war correspondent.

The same issue of *P.M.* reprints as an editorial an article from *Free World* by Thomas Mann. The 20th-century Goethe (pocket edition) pontificates about his fellow Germans (he doubts "the propriety of pity") and regales us with selections from his diaries for the years 1933 and 1934. The key passage:

The lack of sense for evil that large masses of the German people have shown was and always will be criminal. The tremendous spree that this ever thrill-greedy nation imbibed from the poisoned gin of nationalism ladled out by fools and liars must be paid for. [*Not much of a sentence, that, for a Goethe, even pocket-size.—DM*]. It is impossible to demand of the abused nations of Europe that they shall draw a dividing line between "Nazism" and the German people. If there is such a thing as Germany as a historical entity, then there is also such a thing as responsibility—quite independent of the precarious concept of *guilt*.

Now Thomas Mann himself belongs to that "historical entity" called GERMANY, he uses the GERMAN language, he is a GERMAN. If we abandon "the precarious concept of guilt" and make an individual morally responsible for the deeds of the "historical entity" he gets himself born into, then I fail to see how Thomas Mann is not just as guilty as his fellow Germans trembling under Allied bombs and shells in the wreckage of

their homes—those poor devils Mann has the bad taste and the inhumanity to judge in so Pharisaical a manner. If we abandon “the precarious concept of guilt”, then Mann’s position over here becomes precarious indeed. Is he or is he not a member of that “historical entity”, Germany?

It would be sad if the above specimens represented the sum total of “our side’s” thinking on the responsibility of the German people. But fortunately for the honour of the human race, there are many with contrary opinions. An especially dramatic instance is the Associated Press interview of March 8 with Sergeant Francis W. Mitchell, of New York City, who belonged to one of the first American units to enter Cologne. It has often been observed how much more brutal and blood-thirsty civilians are than those who do the actual fighting. Sergeant Mitchell’s remarks bear this out. He tells how the Germans crawled out of their cellars and brought out beer, bread, jam, and pretzels for the American troops. “They were mostly children and old people—just sort of helpless and glad they were not being killed. It’s hard to keep that icy front when people act friendly; also we Americans used to have some respect for old folks.” The order against fraternization with German civilians, added the Sergeant, works only when the M.P.’s are around. “We are supposed to hate people—to be very tough customers. But as soon as the fighting is over, it works just the other way—we begin to feel sorry for them.”

It is a great thing to be able to see what is right under your nose.

April, 1945

THE GERMANS—THREE YEARS LATER

Note: The Russian blockade of Berlin in the winter of 1948-9 produced a dramatic reversal of the wartime roles of two aggregations of people, the U.S. Air Force and the population of Berlin. The former changed from executioners into relief workers delivering coal and food instead of bombs to the latter, who in turn were transmuted, in our press, from cowardly accomplices of one kind of totalitarianism into heroic resisters against another kind. Since these reversals had very little to do with any free-will choice or action by the human beings who made up the two groups, the episode struck me as an ironic verification of my objections to the concept of collective responsibility, and I wrote for the Winter, 1949, issue of Student Partisan, a mimeographed undergraduate publication at the University of Chicago, the following article:

Man lives in history but is not at all comfortable there. Even at best—by which I mean in a smallish, integrated community like the ancient Greek city state—there is always a desperate struggle between what the individual wants and what happens to him as a result of living in society. (The process of hauling the individual about like a bale, or a corpse, and cramming him into some badly fitting context of ideology or action—this is what is euphemistically called “history”). And at worst—by which I mean the big-scale, industrial-bureaucratic societies in which the peoples of USA, USSR, and most of Europe toss and twist—there is not even a struggle: the individual “citizen” (what a mockery!) has about the same chance of determining his own fate as a hog dangling by one foot from the conveyor belt of a Chicago packing plant.

Not since the completion of the River Rouge plant have we seen so dramatic an expression of American industrial genius as the Berlin airlift. For months now, a city of over two million inhabitants has received all its essential supplies by air. The ingenuity, technical precision, and materialistic mastery shown in this operation are the high point of post-Renaissance man’s long successful struggle to master nature. What vistas of

progress the Victorians, if they could have imagined such a triumph, would have seen stretching away into the future!

Yet we have already seen, only three years ago, another airlift, perhaps not quite so amazing technically but still impressive enough, manned by the same kind of skilful young Americans and aimed at the same city and the same people, but whose cargo was not food and coal but rather blockbusters. Certainly we live in a world of shifting, flickering shadows, of protean shapes that suddenly change from horror to benevolence, from death to life. What is reality and what is illusion here? Were the bombs real, or is the food real? Were the young Americans who so masterfully bombed Berlin evil men? And are their similars who are with equal mastery keeping the city alive good men?

Clearly, such concepts cannot be used here. In the last month of the war, the American air force destroyed in two nights the city of Dresden: one of the loveliest collections of architecture in Europe, a city of no military significance and with no war industry to speak of, a city that at the time was crammed with civilian refugees from the East, hundreds of thousands of whom died under the American firebombs. Yet I venture to say that very few of the Americans who planned and executed this atrocity felt any special hatred of the churches and refugees they destroyed. Nor do the airlift personnel today feel any special love for the Berliners they are feeding. There is indeed a logic to both actions, but it is not a human, not a rational or ethical logic. It is rather the logic of a social mechanism which has grown so powerful that human beings have become simply its instruments.

Such a viewpoint is chill and uncomfortable. Hence the importance of political mythologists who "humanize" these vast impersonal processes by injecting good and evil concepts into them. So in the last war it was possible to convince many Americans—especially those who had been to college and there had acquired the dangerous knack of thinking in general terms—that the German people were the accomplices rather than the first victims of Hitler; that they were collectively responsible

for the Nazi horrors. To construct this myth required much rewriting and re-interpretation of history, in the style of the Soviet Politburo, to show that the Germans have been militaristic since Tacitus. It was also necessary to ignore such facts as that the concentration camps up to 1939 were filled with Germans, and only with Germans, that the majority of Germans in 1933 voted against Hitler, and that the existence of the great death camps of 1942-44 was carefully concealed from the German people. It was also necessary to ignore the fact, above all, that there is only one kind of person who can be expected to resist the policy of a totalitarian state like Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia, namely, the hero.

Heroism, like artistic talent, has always been a rare quality. To expect the average German—or American—to be a hero is about as reasonable as to demand that he be a poet. The absurdity of this whole approach appears in the fact that today the same Berliners who were denounced three years ago as cowards and sadists because they didn't "stop Hitler", are now presented as a race of heroes because they are resisting Russian pressure. The only Germans who can be called heroes are those in the Soviet zone who are actively fighting against the Russians. There aren't many of them, just as there weren't many Frenchmen who took part in the Resistance, and just as there would not be many Americans who would resist a native fascism once it got its repressive apparatus functioning. Heroes just aren't very common, that's all. And nothing is more vulgar than the type of liblab journalist or scholar-like Thomas Mann, for example, or the late editors of *PM*—who demand of others a heroism which it is doubtful, putting it charitably, that they themselves possess.

This does not mean that the Berliners have not showed courage in siding with the West. Nor does it mean that it makes no difference, practically or ethically, which side they choose. I think it makes a great deal of difference, and I am very glad they have chosen the West. The point, rather, is the obvious one—obvious, that is, to everyone except a well-educated liblab—that almost everybody acts politically according to the

relationship of two factors: (a) his own values, (b) the risk of expressing those values. In Hitler's Berlin, as in Stalin's Moscow, the risk—assuming one's values, as I believe was the case with the great majority of Berliners and is similarly the case in Moscow, run counter to the policy of the regime—the risk, I say, was so terrifying as to deter all but the tiny minority of heroes. In Berlin today, however, since the Western armies are still in occupation, the only risk is the possible future exit of those armies. (I lack space here to go into the political dilemma posed for socialists and pacifists by the fact that the American army, a most reactionary organization whose purpose is mass slaughter, is the only bulwark protecting the trade unions and popularly elected government of Berlin against liquidation by the Russians. Such feeble civil liberties as the Berliners now have, and the possibility of winning more later on, depends on the U.S. Army staying there. This is a real dilemma for all us Utopians, one not to be charmed away by *our* mythologists.) Since the future exit of those armies is always a possibility, it takes some courage to side now openly with the West. Courage—not heroism; most people *do* have courage, in moderate, reasonable amounts.

The really significant thing about the Berliners' support of the West against the Russians is not the courage it shows—which, as just noted, is what any one but a myth-maker would expect of the Germans, or of any other people—but rather the fact that given the chance to express, without too much risk, their preference, they have so overwhelmingly chosen bourgeois democracy over totalitarianism. This is part of a worldwide phenomenon since the war.

In almost every situation where there have been reasonably free elections, the Communists have lost out. And this, too, despite the fact that all the West offers is a continuance of a most imperfect status quo. The slogans are all on the Communists' side; even the historical tradition of social revolution is more on their side than on capitalist America's. Yet most people seem to still possess enough primitive sense of their own materialistic interests, enough distaste for the police state even when bedecked with red banners, to prefer Western "de-

cadence" and "stagnation" to the dynamism of the terrible Utopia offered by the East.

This is a modest enough triumph. There is very little that we can honestly say in praise of the institutions and culture of Western capitalism beyond the statement that, now that we have seen thirty years of Communist development, the comparison is greatly in favour of capitalism. But it is something in these dark times that the population of Berlin, after fifteen years of Nazism, saturation bombing, and post-war starvation, still has enough human feeling and vitality left to offer some resistance to totalitarianism. Perhaps human nature is less malleable than the modern dictators assume. Perhaps we may even draw some optimistic conclusions about the "national character" of the *Russian* people from the case of Berlin.

WITH MALICE TOWARD SOME

SOME LIGHT ON Roosevelt's claim to political progressivism, and also on his Administration's "hard peace" policy for the German people, is shown by a curious fact which *The Progressive* of July 31 last uncovered. In his speech accepting the Democratic nomination, Roosevelt quoted as follows from "the greatest wartime president in our history":

With firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and all nations.

The Progressive pointed out that Roosevelt had omitted the first eight words of this passage from Lincoln, eight words which are the most famous of all, namely: "With malice toward none; with charity for all." The atrophy of progressive values in modern American politics appears strikingly in this deletion, just as in the omission, from the marble wall of the new Jefferson Memorial in Washington, of the words in the Declaration of Independence about governments "deriving their powers from the consent of the governed" and the revolutionary "Right of the People" to "alter or abolish" any form of government they feel is not serving them well. Freud wrote a whole book on the significance of slips of the tongue and other apparently trivial manifestations of "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life". Semantic alterations like the above have an equally profound meaning in what might be termed "political psychopathology".

November, 1944

LOOKING AT THE WAR

THE UNCONSCIOUS WAR

AT THE BEGINNING of *La Chartreuse de Parme*, Stendhal has a memorable description of the liberation of Milan from Austrian rule. It is 1796, and the young Bonaparte, fresh from the brilliant victory at the Bridge of Lodi, has entered the city at the head of his revolutionary army "which, having just won six battles and conquered twenty provinces, was fully equipped except for shoes, trousers, coats and hats":

At once a new and passionate social atmosphere materialized. An entire people realized on the fifteenth of May, 1796, that everything they had respected until then was utterly absurd, if not downright hateful. The withdrawal of the last Austrian regiment marked the downfall of the old ideas; to risk one's life became fashionable. Everyone began to live only to be happy after centuries of hypocrisy and dullness, everyone felt he must love something passionately and be prepared to risk his neck for it. The interminable, suspicious despotism of Charles V and Philip II had plunged the Lombards in deepest night; now their statues were overturned and suddenly everything was flooded with light. For half a century, while the Encyclopedists and Voltaire had been enlightening France, the monks had dinned it into the good people of Milan that to learn to read or any other worldly pursuit was useless bother, and that if one paid one's tithes punctually to the priest and confessed one's little sins, one was practically sure to go to heaven . . . The exaltation was so excessive and widespread that I can explain it only by this profound historical reflection: these people had been bored for a century.

So it was in the springtime of the bourgeois revolution. Last fall another army arrived in another land ruled by reaction. For the victory at Lodi, the deal with Darlan. For the ragged

regiments commanded by a twenty-seven-year-old genius, the vast fleets bearing a formidably equipped host commanded by generals neither young nor geniuses. For the fresh breeze of freedom, the perpetuation of the stale atmosphere of Vichy. When Bonaparte entered Milan in 1796, the Marquis del Dongo fled to his country estate; when Eisenhower entered Algiers in 1942, the men of Vichy entertained his officers at their clubs. Bonaparte brought along a young artist who gave the delighted Milanese the first political cartoon they had ever seen: a drawing of a French soldier slitting the belly of a rich landowner, from which poured not blood but wheat. Eisenhower brought along Col. Darryl F. Zanuck, late of Hollywood. Eisenhower's army was as "non-political"—in the sense that the reactionary anti-Semite, Giraud, is non-political—as Bonaparte's was political. One might have expected an army of the Four Freedoms to begin with the liberation of the native population. But Eisenhower's first communiqué states: "The forces under my command bring with them a solemn assurance that the French North African Empire will remain French." His subordinate General Patton, defined the modest aim of the American forces as the maintenance of "political as well as economic normality" in North Africa. Rarely before in history has so vast a physical force been deployed with such tragically—or comically, perhaps—small political results.

It is ironical that the first great American military venture in the war, a coup hailed by the liberals at the time as a "turning point", should have proven to be such indeed, but a turning away from their values. What the French collapse of 1940 revealed about European bourgeois democracy, the North African campaign revealed about its American counterpart.

The positive idealism which was dominant in the first part of the war, as expressed in the Four Freedoms, the Atlantic Charter, and Henry Wallace's "People's Revolution" speeches, has been superseded by a new line. As military victory comes closer, the philanthropic slogans can be honourably discharged: they have done their "bit", or tried to, and might prove embarrassing if permitted to survive into the peace-conference stage. There is also a broader consideration: the antagonism

between actual policies and formal principles has become too acute to be bridged by even the most powerful propaganda. In England since last summer, the Tories have so consolidated their control of the Government that the Labour Party ministers dare not support the Beveridge Plan; Cripps has been squeezed dry and thrown aside; Gandhi has been jailed and the Congress Party has been temporarily defeated. In this country, the fall elections returned the most conservative Congress since 1933; the new taxes are regressive, food prices rise sharply, wages are frozen, profits enormous; the unions have become instruments of Governmental control, and the Administration and Congress are using the mine strike as an occasion for still further weakening labour; the Negroes are jim-crowed as much as ever in military and civilian life; big business is more powerful than ever, and its representatives have excluded almost completely both labour men and New Dealers from the policy-making level of the war agencies; foreign policy has been increasingly determined by the reactionary State Department. As a former radical leader remarked recently, "This time we're getting the post-war disillusionment during the war."

A nation fighting the kind of war the French Revolutionary armies fought, or the Red Army, in 1919, does all it can to *politicalize* the struggle. It is notable that everything possible is done by our leaders to *de-politicalize* this war. As it grinds automatically on, as it spreads and becomes more violent, the conflict becomes less and less meaningful, a vast nightmare in which we are all involved and from which whatever hopes and illusions we may have had have by now leaked out. Some weeks ago, the Office of War Information issued directives to its propagandists on "the nature of the enemy". He was described as a bully, a murderer, a thief, a gangster, etc., but only once in the lengthy document as a *fascist*. Soviet Russia has never pretended to be fighting for any international socialist ideals, but simply for national survival—"the Great Patriotic War", as the official slogan has it. The recent dissolution of the Comintern was Stalin's effort to wash his regime clean of even the smell of any general principles. With his usual cynical boldness, Dr. Goebbels expresses the new line: "To date, from

the national viewpoint, we have fought only for illusory objectives—for the House of Prussia, or Hapsburg; for socialism and for national socialism; for questions of proletariat or bourgeoisie. But today it is for important things we are fighting: for coal, for iron, for petroleum, and above all, for daily bread." The German Army fights on because it is—an army. The people at home support the war—endure the war might be more accurate—because they rightly fear an even more terrible Versailles if the other side wins. The unreality of the "Democracy-vs.-Slavery" propaganda of the United Nations is exposed by their inability to appeal politically to the masses of enslaved Nazi Europe. The best wisdom of our war leaders is that it will take x tons of bombs to reduce y acres of European cities to rubble.

The increasing *unconscious* character of the war—in the sense that the policies of the United Nations express no positive ideology or principles but merely an opportunistic adaptation to a reactionary *status quo*—coming as it does on top of twenty years of defeat of democratic and radical forces, has had its effect on American intellectual life. "Le 2 décembre m'a physiquement dépolitiqué," wrote Baudelaire after Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*. "Il n'y a plus d'idées générales . . . Si j'avais voté, je n'aurais pu voter que pour moi." I owe this quotation to Meyer Schapiro's "Courbet and Popular Imagery" (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 4, Nos. 3 & 4, 1941), which is in part a study of the effect of 1848 on French writers and artists. It is remarkable, by the way, how many of the issues of this period (and the intellectual reactions to them) anticipate those of our own time. "There are no more general ideas"—what better describes the intellectual atmosphere today? Most political thinking has abandoned not only the old optimism of progress, but also the very notion of any consistent attempt to direct the evolution of society in a desirable direction. Submission to the brute force of events, choice between evils rather than between positive programmes, a scepticism about basic values and ultimate ends, a refusal to look too far ahead—this is the mood.

The system of values which has been built up slowly, painfully since the end of the Middle Ages and which has com-

manded general assent, in Europe and here, since the end of the 18th century, is today threatened as never before. These values, crystallized around the free development of the individual, first became political realities in the two great revolutions of the 18th century. The "LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS!" of 1776 was echoed by the "LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY!" of 1789.

What has happened is that these liberal values have come into conflict with the actual development of capitalism, and, as always, it is the values and not the productive system which are giving way. Worse, those developments which had seemed to be steps towards the realization of these values appear today as their executioners. The great liberating power of the last two centuries, the growth of the forces of production, which turned men's eyes from heaven to earth and created the material plenty out of which a humanistic culture and ethics could grow, this has now become, by a dialectical turn, the new enslaver. Man has learned to master nature so well that we use the most advanced technology to blast to bits the fabrics of culture. Art museums, hospitals, vast industrial works, ancient churches, and modernistic housing projects, whole historic cities like Warsaw, Coventry, Cologne and Nuremberg—all are being destroyed with the most admirable efficiency week after week, month after month. Everyone can read and write, popular education is a reality—and so the American masses read pulp fiction and listen to soap operas on that triumph of technology, the radio, and the German and Russian masses are the more easily indoctrinated with a lying and debased official culture. The freeing of man to develop himself has had the effects which Erich Fromm described in *Escape from Freedom*: craving to be rid of this empty "freedom", the masses turn neurotically to totalitarian leaders. The struggle for universal suffrage is won, and the result is the rise of plebescitary dictatorship, in which the State authority becomes sacred precisely because it claims to represent "the People" against the individual. Far from decreasing in power, as all progressive thinkers from Jefferson to Marx and Lenin hoped and believed it would, the State is becoming an end in itself, subjugating the

human being as the Church did in the Middle Ages. In the new religion of the State, which has reached full growth in Germany and Russia and which is steadily growing here, the individual is once more frozen into the hierarchical, irrational pattern of a society based on status. The peoples of the world are being organized into vast power-States, military-socialist in form, which are devastating the globe in their internecine struggles.

Partisan Review, July, 1943

THREE WORLDS

THE GLOW OF world brotherhood induced in the press by the Teheran meeting has ebbed away into a spooky twilight in which prowl sinister shapes of power politics. Even the man-in-the-street is now beginning to realize that Willkie's "One World" is actually Three Worlds, whose imperialistic interests are already beginning to clash in World War III tempo before World War II is over. There is England, there is America, and there is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Public uneasiness has been increased by the general belief that the Allied invasion of Europe is close at hand. It is awkward that the period in which the ultimate military effort of the Allies is to be made should coincide with such a wave of popular anxiety over the purposes and consequences of the war, but such are the hazards which political leaders today face. No wonder Anthony Eden recently complained that never in his experience has foreign policy been so difficult to conduct.

The question which Americans are asking more and more is that which a group of Republican Congressmen recently put to Secretary Cordell Hull: Has the over-all international organization endorsed at Moscow and Teheran by the United States, England, and Russia "been abandoned in favour of piecemeal arrangements on various topics now deemed to have importance in the post-war world"? Hull's answer did not satisfy the Congressmen, nor the nation. The Twohey Analysis of Newspaper Opinion, for example, shows an incredibly rapid drop in editorial support of Roosevelt's foreign policy: from 80 per cent favourable at the beginning of February, to 20 per cent only two months later. The columnists have been twittering ever more insistently. Dorothy Thompson: "If we enter Europe without a plan, while the Soviets have a clear one in reserve, we stand to become caught in situations for which we are completely unprepared." Arthur Krock: "If we have a postwar policy toward Europe, including the disposition of

Germany, the time is overdue to state it." William Philip Simms: "Anglo-American policy has reached such an obscure, undecipherable stage that United Nations circles here [in Washington] regard it as the prize mystery of the war."

So great has been the clamour that the aloof State Department has put the unhappy Mr. Hull on the air twice in recent weeks with lengthy expositions of American foreign policy. His speeches produced little effect, perhaps because they consisted mostly of pious platitudes, reassuring only to the editors of *PM*, who urged their readers to clip out the sacred texts and preserve them "for permanent reference".

It will be noted that two things, by no means synonymous, worry the average American about his country's foreign policy. One is that the allegedly democratic war aims of the United Nations have turned out to be mere phrases, and the post-war world threatens to be an even ghastlier mess than the pre-war world. The other, and I think more acute, anxiety is that in such a world his country's national interests will not be sufficiently protected, i.e., that American imperialism has not sufficiently worked out a strategy to get the upper hand over its Russian and British competitors. The failure of the liberal and labour movements in this country and England to dominate the war effort on both the domestic and the foreign-policy fronts, or even to hold their own against the reactionaries—this failure, predictable from the moment they gave "critical support" to the present war governments in England and America, has caused the man-in-the-street to lose interest in reform and progress, for the moment, and to put his faith in the victory of *his* imperialism over its competitors. Hence Willkie's defeat, hence the recent enthusiasm in the British Commons, from Tories to left Labourites, for the strengthening of the Empire after the war.

The anxiety of Americans is intensified by the curious fact that, of the three major powers, the one with the mightiest economy is the one with the weakest and most confused foreign policy. The situation after the last war promises to repeat itself after this: an unaccountable failure of what would seem to be by far the strongest imperialistic power to dominate the post-

war world. It may even go so far as a repetition of the withdrawal movement of the twenties. Isolated behind their oceans, Americans seem to be still a provincial people. This psychology probably derives from the unique position of American capitalism, which has up to now had a domestic economy sufficiently broad and developed to sustain it with comparatively little intercourse with the rest of the world. It may be that this is no longer true, but at least the American domestic economy comes closer to it than is the case with either Russia, which needs the higher technology of Europe, or England, which needs the markets and raw materials of colonial and backward European areas. And whether true or not, most American businessmen apparently still believe it.

Russia's military success plus the relative ineffectuality of Anglo-American arms have given her the initiative in world politics today. Furthermore, Russia has a much more aggressive and definite foreign policy than either of her war partners. This fact, which has manifested itself with especial force in recent months, is the basic fact about world politics today.

The Teheran conference was held at the beginning of December. This was supposedly the final seal on the indissoluble brotherhood of the Big Three. No one proclaimed this more fervently than the Russians. The American Communists, for example, have in a few months created a mythos of Teheran which gives that Iranian city all the overtones of the Bastille or Bunker Hill. "Enemy of Teheran" has become the new anathema for housewives who buy on the black market.

It is, therefore, not surprising to find that since Teheran the Kremlin has taken a whole series of unilateral actions, without consulting her partners, which have shattered whatever unity and confidence once existed among the Big Three. It is these post-Teheran actions of Russia, indeed, which have been mainly responsible for her partners' present state of nerves. Rarely has the conflict between form and content of international power-politics been more ironically revealed.

"This cook will prepare peppery dishes," wrote Lenin about Stalin in his "testament". What the master chef of the Kremlin

is now preparing for his allies the future will show. A Moscow dispatch in the *N. Y. Times* of April 30 is rather alarming, however, considering Stalin's habit of talking one way and acting in just the opposite way (maybe it's the dialectic in him).

The dominant themes for Russia's third wartime observance of May Day [it begins] are that the Soviet Union is fully committed to the principles of the Moscow and Teheran conferences and is doing everything possible to fulfil the decision taken there; that Russia is seeking to strengthen its coalition with Britain and the United States and to anticipate the enemy's efforts to sow discord among the Allies; and that the Soviet Union aims at a diplomatic wall of military isolation for Germany.

After this ominous report, Churchill and Roosevelt would do well to be prepared for plenty of pepper in the soup.

May, 1944

WARSAW

THE TRAGEDY OF Warsaw is over. For two months the Polish underground army, equipped only with light weapons, stood up to the mechanized fury of the Reichswehr's planes, tanks and siege guns. Betrayed passively by two of their "allies", England and the United States, and actively by the third, Soviet Russia, General Bor's underground fighters have surrendered—such of them as are still alive—after 63 days of heroic battle. The Warsaw tragedy is over. But the treachery, the brutal calculation of Russian policy which delivered the Warsaw underground into the hands of the Nazis—the reckoning for this has not yet been presented. Let us attempt a bill of particulars.

The facts may be briefly stated.

At the end of July, the Red Army was approaching the city of Warsaw at the rate of from five to fifteen miles a day. By August 1, its advance lines were within ten miles of the city. That day the Polish underground army inside Warsaw, commanded by General Bor, began open street-fighting against the German occupation forces. By August 3 they had captured strategic sections of the city and controlled perhaps 40 per cent of the total area. As this is written, over two months later, the Red Army has not yet entered the city proper. Between August 1 and September 15 it stood still, making no attempt to advance; in those six weeks there was furious activity to the North, in the Baltic region, and above all to the South in the Balkans, which were overrun by the Red Army in an offensive which rolled forward ten, twenty miles a day. But in the centre: All Quiet on the Warsaw Front. No aid whatsoever, furthermore, was sent by Russia to the Warsaw Fighters during this six-week period.

On September 15 the Red Army resumed its drive on Warsaw, and began a battle for the suburb of Praga. After a few days this offensive seems to have been abandoned also, and at

the moment of writing the Red Army has still not gotten inside Warsaw proper. In the two months interval, General Bor's underground fighters have naturally suffered terrible losses and have lost most of the area they controlled early in August. The Germans have rounded up 200,000 "hostages"—old men, women, and children—from the city and have sent them to a camp at Pruszkow, where they are being killed by slow starvation.

So much for the military story. One political fact must be added: General Bor and the bulk of his underground fighters are loyal to the present Polish Government-in-Exile in London; Stalin has refused to recognize this government and has set up in Moscow a rival government called the Polish Committee of National Liberation. The Kremlin states this is because the London Government is reactionary and has no popular support. In fact, however, the London Government is a "national front" of all shades of political parties, from socialists to reactionaries, and as for popular support, the Warsaw uprising itself shows a considerable degree of it. Much more, without question, than the Moscow Committee has yet commanded. One statement may be made quite definitely: the Moscow Committee is more subservient to Russian pressure than the London Government. It is, in fact, simply a Quisling outfit in no way different from those the Germans strewed about occupied Europe except that its allegiance is to Moscow instead of to Berlin.

What, then, lies behind these facts? Why did the Red Army fail to penetrate to Warsaw for two months, with devastating effects to the Polish underground?

The Russians and their friends say that the uprising was "premature" and against the wishes of Moscow and that General Bor wanted to make political capital for the London Government.

These claims are refuted by the following facts:

(1) According to the *Manchester Guardian*, the Union of Polish Patriots, a group with headquarters in Moscow, broadcast throughout July appeals to the people of Warsaw to arise

and fight the Germans. As the Red Army drew near to Warsaw, these appeals, which went out over the Kosciusko radio station in Moscow, became more urgent. On July 28, for example, Radio Kosciusko exhorted the inhabitants of Warsaw: "Fight the Germans! Do not doubt that Warsaw hears the guns of the battle which is to bring her liberation!" July 30: "Warsaw trembles from the roar of guns! . . . People of Warsaw, to arms! The whole population of Warsaw should gather around the Underground Army! Attack the Germans!"

(2) A dispatch in the N. Y. *Times* of August 15 stated:

The rising of General Bor's underground forces in Warsaw two weeks ago had been designed specifically to frustrate a counter-attack by four German armoured divisions against the Red Army forces closing in on Warsaw from the East. . . . Moreover, Premier Stalin, as well as the British and American High Command in London, had promised to send aid to the ill-armed Polish forces, and detailed plans for the delivery of arms and the bombings of German strongholds had been dispatched to Moscow.

(3) Premier Mikolajczyk of the Polish Government-in-Exile, as quote in the N. Y. *Times* of September 1, stated that (a) the Red Army was informed of the projected uprising through the British and American Combined Chiefs of Staff; (b) he himself told Molotov while he was in Moscow on July 21 negotiating with the Kremlin, that the Warsaw uprising was imminent; (c) detachments loyal to the Soviet-sponsored Polish Committee of National Liberation were fighting in Warsaw alongside General Bor's men. These allegations have not been denied by Moscow.

That the Kremlin knew of the uprising in advance and approved of it—or rather, a most important emendation, *gave the impression it approved of it*—would thus seem to be pretty conclusively established. But let us assume that all the above data is false, and that all the claims of the Stalinists are true as to the rising being "premature" and in conflict with the Red Army's plans. The flimsiness of this excuse appears if one

considers the parallel case of the Paris uprising. Here the FFI started fighting while the Allied troops were scores of miles away from Paris, not ten. Nor is there any question (as there is in the case of Warsaw) that the Allied military plans did not at that time call for the capture of the city. The strategy was to cut off the retreat of the German armies, and the taking of Paris played no part in it. Yet, when the FFI appealed to Eisenhower for help, he diverted a division from the main military task and sent it into Paris. His decision was a political one, just as was that of the Kremlin not to help General Bor.

It is also interesting to note that some reports have it that the FFI was forced into its uprisings because of the large-scale arrests and executions by the Germans preparatory to evacuating the city. Either they fought for their lives, or they died before German firing squads. The same choice probably confronted the Polish underground in Warsaw, even more brutally, since the German terror in Poland far surpassed that in France. Thus, whether strategically "premature" or not, the Warsaw uprising was necessary from another viewpoint. However, since Stalin had the same aim as the German High Command, to exterminate the Polish underground, he could not be expected to appreciate this necessity.

For why, after all, did the Russians give no aid to the Polish underground fighters for a month and a half, despite repeated and frantic appeals from General Bor; and, even more, *why did they sabotage the attempt of the British to give such aid?* Vernon Bartlett, a liberal Member of Parliament, has revealed that the British and American high commands all through August made "repeated" requests that the Russians would allow RAF planes to land on Russian soil after having dropped munitions to General Bor in Warsaw. (For months now British and American planes bombing the Balkans have been shuttling between Italian and Russian airfields instead of having to make the round trip without landing.) The Soviet Government refused these requests up through the middle of September. Consequently, the RAF planes used to supply the Warsaw underground army had to turn around and make a non-stop return trip all the way back to their Italian bases, instead of landing

behind the Red Army lines a few miles outside of Warsaw. By September 12, 250 RAF flyers had been lost on this hazardous route.

The Russians justified this incredible sabotage—and sabotage of their British allies, note, as well as of the Warsaw fighters—by claiming Bor's forces held such small areas that supplies could not be parachuted to them accurately and would fall into the Germans' hands. This excuse, however, was exploded by the Russians themselves in mid-September when they for the first time opened their airfields to the RAF planes and also sent their own planes over Warsaw to drop supplies to the underground. For obviously if it is true that Bor's forces held such small areas *in early August* that supplies dropped to them would be likely to land inside the German lines instead, then today, when Bor has lost most of the ground he once held, the likelihood is very much greater. The bogging down of the Red Army's offensive for six weeks, and its renewal (in token form, at least) in mid-September; the sabotage of aid to the underground during those same six weeks, and the reversal of this policy in mid-September—these events have nothing to do with military considerations, as the Stalinists and their Lib-Lab supporters claim, and everything to do with political considerations. The game that Stalin played here was as cool, brutal, and treacherous a squeeze play as even that master of the double-cross has ever perpetrated.

The Poles, whatever their other defects, are magnificent fighters and passionate rebels. Poland was the only country in Europe, *including Russia*, which did not produce a single Quisling leader of any standing; the Nazis were unable to find *one* university professor, *one* important businessman, *one* labour leader, *one* high military officer in the whole of Poland who would enter a Quisling government. In Russia's imperialistic plans for post-war Europe, a Moscow-dominated Polish regime is essential. But the Warsaw underground, skilled in the use of arms, toughened by years of struggle against the Germans, stood in the way of such a regime. The Kremlin's game is thus clear. First it provoked the uprising by radio appeals and by interposing no objection to it when Premier Mikołajczyk revealed

it was being planned. Then it called off the Red Army's offensive for six weeks at the very gates of the city and did its best to prevent arms reaching the insurgents, while the Germans mobilized tanks and heavy artillery to batter to pieces General Bor's ill-equipped fighters, and while 200,000 civilian inhabitants of Warsaw were slowly starved to death in Camp Pruszkow.

As a Marxist, Stalin is well aware of the principle of division of labour: he saw a chance to let the Nazis do his dirty work for him. Every Warsaw fighter killed by the Germans was one less for his own firing squads to liquidate. That the Kremlin finally sent aid and renewed, in token form at least, the Red Army's drive on the city in mid-September was because even the Kremlin has to make some concession to world opinion, and the Warsaw situation had become too rotten to be prolonged further (part of Bor's forces after all, were actually followers of the Moscow Committee; they were sacrificed along with the rest as far as Stalin dared, but there must have been some serious repercussions among his tame Poles in Moscow). Also in six weeks of slaughter, the Nazis had "fulfilled" most of the plan anyway.

The press and the governments of this country and England behaved shamefully. Some aid had to be sent to Warsaw, if only because of the questions that might otherwise be asked in Parliament and the speeches that might be made in Congress. But the very minimum was sent—most of the RAF flyers detailed for the job, incidentally, were members of the Polish squadron—and not a word of criticism of the Kremlin's refusal to co-operate was made by any government official in either country. The American press has either passed over the whole affair in silence, or has accepted the Stalinist rationalization that the uprising was "premature". For not only are the Anglo-American authorities willing to condone almost anything to avoid a clash with Russia, but they must also regard the Warsaw street fighters with more alarm than enthusiasm. They, too, want an "orderly" post-war Europe.

But the tale is not told yet. On September 30, Chairman Osubka-Morawski of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (Moscow) held a press conference which seems to

indicate still another turn of Kremlin policy. Attacking General Bor as "a criminal against the Polish people", he stated that evidence had come into his Committee's hands that . . . the London Polish Government had ordered the Warsaw uprising. (Thus the uprising now has become an actual crime, and to this Stalinist leader it seems sufficiently damning merely to "accuse" the London Government of something which to a normal mind might seem a matter for legitimate pride: that it stimulated a popular uprising against the Nazis.) "If this is substantiated," he continued, "these persons also would be tried as criminals, as Bor will be if he falls into the hands of the Red or Polish armies." Here we might add that the London *Tribune* of September 1 reports that the Moscow Committee had dropped leaflets from airplanes to the Warsaw insurgents "threatening punishment and execution of the men they described as the guilty leaders of the uprising".

The new turn of Kremlin policy would seem to be to call off once more the Red Army drive on Warsaw that began anew on September 10. It has been many days since reports have come of fighting around Warsaw, and Osobka-Morawski stated that the city could not be taken until sufficient forces were mustered completely to encircle it. "He admitted that those forces were not now available because they were tied up on other parts of the long Soviet-German front." When we add the facts that Osobka-Morawski gave his interview 24 hours after conferring with Stalin, and that his denunciation of General Bor as a "criminal" followed almost immediately on the announcement that the London Government had made Bor its war chief succeeding General Soskowski, the pattern begins to emerge. Stalin has declared all-out war on the London Government, probably because he has finally concluded he cannot make a deal. The Warsaw insurgents are therefore to be left to their fate, their leaders are threatened with execution, such token aid as they got from Russia two weeks ago will probably be no longer forthcoming (the Soviet press has, significantly, carried no news of this aid), and the heroic Polish underground is now smeared by Stalin's officials as "criminal" and "traitorous".

Comrade Osubka-Morawski ventured "the sad prediction that the people of Warsaw, of whom it was estimated 250,000 had already died in the uprising, must undergo still further suffering". This prediction will unquestionably be realized, for it is simply a statement of future Kremlin policy. But—

250,000 dead—and the Red Army sitting ten miles away for two months!

250,000 dead—and the Soviet Government refuses to allow relief planes to land on its territory!

250,000 dead—and the leaders of this popular revolt against Nazi oppression are threatened with execution by the Soviet Government!

After Warsaw, whatever honest doubts one might have had as to the nature of the Soviet regime and the direction in which it is heading must be resolved. This butcher of popular insurrection, this double-crosser of its own allies, this factory of lies and slander, this world centre of counter-revolution can have nothing in common with socialism. We cannot compromise with it if we would achieve our aims as socialists. Our slogan must be, once more: *Ecrasez l'Infame!*

October, 1944

AT THIS WRITING, it is just four months after the Polish underground began its heroic and tragic uprising against the Germans in Warsaw, under the illusion that the Red Army, which had arrived within ten or fifteen miles of the city, would join forces with them inside Warsaw in a few days. The Red Army has not yet taken Warsaw but with his customary energy in such matters, Stalin has already had his puppet "National Committee of Polish Liberation" appoint a puppet "Lord Mayor of Warsaw". (The taking of the city by the Red Army is a mere military detail; plenty of time for that later; the important thing is that the political interests of the inhabitants of Warsaw—if any—are now in reliable hands.) On November 22, Radio Moscow carried the following broadcast by this official, one Spychalski, describing the interview he had just had with Stalin as one of a delegation of citizens of Warsaw!

Marshal Stalin and Foreign Commissar Molotov received us in an extremely friendly manner, and Marshal Stalin showed an almost brotherly interest in the condition of Warsaw and the needs of its population. He inquired about the destruction wrought upon the city by the Nazis and assured us that the Soviet Union is prepared to assist her ally, Poland, in the reconstruction of our beautiful capital. In giving this assurance, he said: "And what the Soviet Union promises, it unfailingly carries out."

Our discussion lasted for more than two hours, and Marshal Stalin made many exceptionally valuable comments on the military as well as the political situation. While all of us were very grateful to the great leader of the Soviet people, we were hesitant to take up more of his time. But he insisted that he could "always find time for the brotherly Polish people".

In our conversations, Marshal Stalin stressed particularly the need for friendship and alliance between all people of Slav nationality. . . . Our visit in Moscow has given us new inspiration for our efforts towards the speedy liberation of our country and all other tasks.

The spineless and moral insensibility of present-day American liberalism appeared in the way those modern Pilates, our liberal editors, washed their hands of the whole business. The dailies, *PM* and the *Post*, ignored the issue when they didn't print the usual Stalinoid rationalizations. *The Nation* editorially took its notorious Moscow Trial Line—"We'll know the truth in a hundred years; until then, we must suspend judgment." In the September 23 issue appeared the only editorial I saw on the subject. Its classic beginning: "The full truth about the Warsaw patriots' uprising will not be known until after the war. Reports emanating from Moscow, from Lublin, from London and from beleaguered Warsaw itself simply do not jibe. ['What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer.] The fate of the Warsaw fighters has been but dimly seen through thick clouds of political controversy." It used to be the job of an editor of a paper like *The Nation* to penetrate

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"thick clouds of political controversy" and to decide, in case of conflicting reports, where the weight of evidence lay. But that was B.K.—Before Kirchwey. It is evident now that the complexities of the modern world have become too much for the good lady. Especially when she confronts the horrifying situation of the report which has the least factual evidence behind it being also the one which has the most state power behind it.

To preserve its liberal franchise, *The Nation* ran one excessively cautious article on Warsaw by W. R. Malinowski, an official spokesman for the London Committee who was so diplomatic that he ventured not a word of direct criticism of Russia; and two not at all cautious articles by the magazine's regular Moscow correspondent, the veteran Stalinist hack, Anna Louise Strong. *The New Republic* also had little to say editorially about the affair, and that on *The Nation* plane. Its regular contributor, Heinz H. F. Eulau, gave a perfect specimen of Lib-Lab evasion when confronted by crimes committed by the wrong people when he wrote in the September 25 issue: "The Soviet offensive may have been stalled before Warsaw, but aid by air might have been possible. Regardless of whether the Soviet refusal to support the underground is morally right or wrong, it emphasizes Russia's determination to have her own way in Poland." Regardless? But it is just the rightness or wrongness which should be the question. Why not: "Regardless of whether the Nazis' killing three million Jews in gas chambers is right or wrong, it emphasizes Hitler's determination to eliminate the Jews from Europe?"

December, 1944

HORROR—OURS OR THEIRS?

BY THE TIME this appears, the Nazi Government will probably have formally surrendered and the European phase of World War II will be over, so far as large-scale military operations go at least. In its last years, the war became a war of annihilation, by mutual choice of both sides. The Nazis realized they had no hope of surviving defeat and calculated that their policies, if not themselves, had the best chance of being revived later on if Germany were devastated so thoroughly as to prove to every German that Hitler was right when he warned of the dire plots of international Jewish-Bolshevik-finance-capital. They also probably preferred to go down, if they had to go down, in the melodramatic glory of a Wagnerian *Götterdämmerung*. The Allies also wanted to prolong the war as long as possible so as to do the maximum damage to German cities and industry, and also to reduce the German people by intensive bombing to such a state of chaos, misery, and impotent despair that no alternative revolutionary regime to the Nazis can come into existence.

The result has been a war which in destructiveness of lives, property, and civilized values has had no equal since the religious wars of the 17th century. To say that civilization cannot survive another such war is a truism; the question is whether it can survive this one. Two horrors confront each other in Europe: the dying Nazi horror and the surviving Allied horror; the horror of conscious, rationalized destruction of the fabric of Western culture and ethics; and the horror of vast technological power exerted in war-making by nations with no positive aims and little social consciousness, the result being the maximum devastation and the creation of conditions in which another such phenomenon as Nazism seems all too likely to arise.

We have heard a great deal of late weeks, as the Nazis' main concentration camps are overrun by American troops, of the first horror. Without in any way minimizing the terrible

significance of these reports, which confirm and elaborate the more fragmentary data which I summarized in *The Responsibility of Peoples*, one must note that for many years camps like Dachau and Buchenwald operated entirely on the living flesh of *Germans*, both Jews and political opponents of the Nazis,* that in all those years the American press showed little concern about these atrocities.

Perhaps I read these reports with a prejudiced eye, but I have been struck with how often they confirm the point made in *The Responsibility of Peoples*: that the atrocities were committed by specialized SS and Gestapo formations and were not in any sense actions of the German people.

"I found that German soldiers did not like this cruelty," said a French sergeant who had seen frightful things during his captivity. "It was the SS and Gestapo and Ukrainian volunteers who did the murdering." (N.Y. *Times*, April 10.)

In *Time* for April 23 there is an account of how the citizens of Ohrdruf were taken on a tour by the Americans of a nearby camp which "few had ever been allowed to see". "The Germans found it hard to believe. Conceded one: 'It's the work of beasts.' That night the Burgermeister and his wife hanged themselves."

A German girl, member of the Hitler Maedchen, was taken on an enforced tour of Buchenwald. "She moaned, with tears running down her face: 'It is terrible what they have done to these people.'" The reporter comments, in evident disapproval: "The pronoun she used was 'they', not 'we'."

The other horror is also reported in our press, but with all the moral indignation left out: the horror of what Allied war-making technology has done to the people of Germany. The destruction of Germany is on a scale which one simply cannot conceive. This morning's paper reports that since the war began British and American planes have dropped the incredible total of 2,454,000 tons of explosives on German "targets" (the quotes are used advisedly). "For every ton the Germans hurled

* Dachau and Buchenwald were the camps in which Bruno Bettelheim was confined and which he described in "Behaviour in Extreme Situations" (*Politics*, August, 1944).

at Britain by bomber plane or V-bomb, they received 315 in return." A month ago, it was estimated that twenty million Germans had fled their homes, and that most of the 250 cities of Germany were in ruins; today the damage must be much greater. Cologne is more completely wrecked than Stalingrad.

These are general statistics which are hard to visualize. The human meaning of bombing on the scale the Allies are now able to inflict may be suggested by three specific instances:

(1) On March 3, planes of the RAF's second Tactical Air Force arrived over The Hague in the early morning hours for a routine bombing of German V-Bomb launching sites. "Because of an error in judgment", the bombs fell instead on the "peace city" itself. Result: 800 Dutch civilians dead, 1,000 injured, 20,000 homeless, and one-sixth of the city in ruins. This was, note, just a routine raid, not a specially mounted mass bombing.

(2) The British *New Leader* of March 3 summarizes a "reliable report from a neutral country" on the effects of the first great RAF raid on Dresden:

It states that the bombers dropped thousands of incendiaries as soon as they were over Dresden and followed these up with high explosives. As in earlier raids on German cities, the incendiaries started immense fires which created such an intense heat that shelterers were driven from shelter. They were still rushing through the streets looking for fresh shelter when the explosives fell. They and the thousands of others for whom there was no shelter accommodation and who were crouching in shop doorways were blown to pieces.

"After the raid many streets were carpeted with corpses and fragments of corpses. Dozens of people, their clothes blazing, jumped into the river which flows through the city—floating bodies filled the stream.

"Shattered bodies lay everywhere. Many, killed by the heat, had shrivelled up to half their normal size."

(3) In the N.Y. *Times* of April 10, John MacCormac described the effect of 18 minutes of bombing on the German city of Hildesheim:

In that 18-minute attack, and by the fires that burned for days after it, this town of 65,000 inhabitants had been destroyed. It had been a cradle of art in Germany. Its series of half-timbered buildings of late Gothic and Renaissance period design had been unrivalled in the whole of the Reich. The most modern buildings in it were 300 years old. The oldest—a Catholic basilica—had been built on a still older foundation in 1054–1079 by medieval craftsmen who gloried in their work. . . . Its Protestant Michaelis Church was rated as one of the grandest Romanesque basilicas in all Germany. . . . So Hildesheim, along with so much else in the Reich that was part of humanity's common treasure, was thrown into the scales of war. Weighed in that balance, Hildesheim was important only for its marshalling yards. Hence the 18-minute bombardment from 2.00 to 2.18 on the afternoon of March 22. . . . Hildesheim is 95 per cent destroyed.

Another Dark Ages has come to Germany, to Europe. In Frankfurt, a correspondent found a pencil-scrawled piece of cardboard stuck up on the ruins of Goethe's birthplace: "HERE WAS THE HOUSE WHERE THE OLD GREAT POET GOETHE WAS BORN".

May, 1945

THE BOMB

AT 9.15 on the morning of August 6, 1945, an American plane dropped a single bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Exploding with the force of 20,000 tons of TNT, The Bomb destroyed in a twinkling two-thirds of the city, including, presumably, most of the 343,000 human beings who lived there. No warning was given. This atrocious action places "us", the defenders of civilization, on a moral level with "them", the beasts of Maidanek. And "we", the American people, are just as much and as little responsible for this horror as "they", the German people.

So much is obvious. But more must be said. For the "atomic" bomb renders anticlimactical even the ending of the greatest war in history. (1) *The concepts, "war" and "progress", are now obsolete.* Both suggest human aspirations, emotions, aims, consciousness. "The greatest achievement of organized science in history," said President Truman after the Hiroshima catastrophe—which it probably was, and so much the worse for organized science. (2) *The futility of modern warfare should now be clear.* Must we not now conclude, with Simone Weil, that the technical aspect of war today is the evil, regardless of political factors? Can one imagine that The Bomb could ever be used "in a good cause"? Do not such means instantly, of themselves, corrupt *any cause*? (3) *The bomb is the natural product of the kind of society we have created.* It is as easy, normal, and unforced an expression of the American Way of Life as electric ice-boxes, banana splits, and hydromatic-drive automobiles. We do not dream of a world in which atomic fission will be "harnessed to constructive ends". The new energy will be at the service of the rulers; it will change their strength but not their aims. The underlying populations should regard this new source of energy with lively interest—the interest of victims. (4) *Those who wield such destructive power are outcasts from humanity.* They may be gods, they may be brutes, but they are not men. (5) *We*

must "get" the national State before it "gets" us. Every individual who wants to save his humanity—and indeed his skin—had better begin thinking "dangerous thoughts" about sabotage, resistance, rebellion, and the fraternity of all men everywhere. The mental attitude known as "negativism" is a good start.

August, 1945

WHAT first appalled us was its blast.

TNT is barely twice as strong as black powder was six centuries ago. World WAR II developed explosives up to 60 per cent more powerful than TNT. The atomic bomb is more than 12,000 times as strong as the best improvement on TNT. One hundred and twenty-three planes, each bearing a single atomic bomb, would carry as much destructive power as all the bombs (2,453,595 tons) dropped by the Allies on Europe during the war.*

It has slowly become evident, however, that the real horror of The Bomb is not blast but radioactivity. Splitting the atom sets free all kinds of radioactive substances, whose power is suggested by the fact that at the Hanford bomb plant, the water used for cooling the "pile" (the structure of uranium and other substances whose atomic interaction produces the explosive) carried off enough radiation to "heat the Columbia River appreciably". *Time* added: "Even the wind blowing over the chemical plant picked up another load of peril, for the stacks gave off a radioactive gas." And Smyth notes: "The fission products produced in one day's run of a 100,000-kilowatt chain-reacting pile of uranium might be sufficient to make a large area uninhabitable."

There is thus no question as to the potential horror of The Bomb's radioactivity. The two bombs actually used were

* *Time*, August 20. *Time's* special "Atomic Age" section is the best general survey I have seen. The most authoritative published scientific account of The Bomb is the 30,000 word report to the War Department by Professor H. D. Smyth of Princeton (summarized by Waldemar Kaempffert in N.Y. *Times* of August 16).

apparently designed as explosive and not gas bombs, perhaps from humanitarian considerations, perhaps to protect the American troops who will later have to occupy Japan. But intentions are one thing, results another. So feared was radioactivity at Hanford that the most elaborate precautions were taken in the way of shields, clothes, etc. No such precautions were taken, obviously, on behalf of the inhabitants of Hiroshima; the plane dropped its cargo of half-understood poisons and sped away. What happened? The very sensitivity of the Army and the scientists on the subject is ominous. When one of the lesser experts who had worked on the bomb, a Dr. Harold Jacobson of New York, stated publicly that Hiroshima would be "uninhabitable" for seventy years, he was at once questioned by FBI agents, after which, "ill and upset", he issued another statement emphasizing that this was merely his own personal opinion, and that his colleagues disagreed with him.

The point is that none of those who produced and employed this monstrosity really knew just how deadly or prolonged these radioactive poisons would be. Which did not prevent them from completing their assignment, nor the Army from dropping the bombs. Perhaps only among men like soldiers and scientists, trained to think "objectively"—i.e. in terms of means, not ends—could such irresponsibility and moral callousness be found. In any case, it was undoubtedly the most magnificent scientific experiment in history, with cities as the laboratories and people as the guinea-pigs.

The official platitude about Atomic Fission is that it can be a Force for Good (production) or a Force for Evil (war), and that the problem is simply how to use its Good rather than its Bad potentialities. This is "just common sense". But, as Engels once remarked, Common Sense has some very strange adventures when it leaves its cosy bourgeois fireside and ventures out into the real world. For, given our present institutions—and the official apologists, from Max Lerner to President Conant of Harvard, envisage at most only a little face-lifting on these—how can The Bomb be "controlled", how can it be "internationalized"? Already the great imperialisms are

jockeying for position in World War III. How can we expect them to give up the enormous advantage offered by The Bomb? May we hope that the destructive possibilities are so staggering that, for simple self-preservation, they will agree to "outlaw" The Bomb? Or that they will foreswear war itself because an "atomic" war would probably mean the mutual ruin of all contestants? The same reasons were advanced before World War I to demonstrate its "impossibility"; also before World War II. The devastation of these wars was as terrible as had been predicted—yet they took place. Like all the great advances in technology of the past century, Atomic Fission is something in which Good and Evil are so closely intertwined that it is hard to see how the Good can be extracted and the Evil thrown away. A century of effort has failed to separate the Good of capitalism (more production) from the Evil (exploitation, wars, cultural barbarism). *This* atom has never been split, and perhaps never will be.

The Marxian socialists, both revolutionary and reformist, also accept the potentialities-for-Good-or-for-Evil platitude, since this platitude is based on a faith in Science and Progress which is shared by Marxists as well as conservatives, and is indeed still the basic assumption of Western thought. (In this respect, Marxism appears to be simply the most profound and consistent intellectual expression of this faith.) Since the Marxists make as a precondition of the beneficial use of Atomic Fission a basic change in present institutions, their position is not open to the objections noted just above. But if one looks deeper than the political level, the Marxist version of the platitude seems at the very least inadequate. It blunts our reaction to the present horror by reducing it to an episode in an historical schema which will "come out all right" in the end, and thus makes us morally callous (with resulting ineffectuality in our actions against the *present* horror) and too optimistic about the problem of evil; and it ignores the fact that such atrocities as The Bomb and the Nazi death camps are *right now* brutalizing, warping, deadening the human beings who are expected to change the world for the better; that modern technology has its own anti-human dynamics which has proved so far much more

powerful than the liberating effects the Marxist schema expects from it.

The bomb produced two widespread and, from the standpoint of The Authorities, undesirable emotional reactions in this country: a feeling of guilt at "our" having done this to "them", and anxiety lest some future "they" do this to "us". Both feelings were heightened by the superhuman *scale* of The Bomb. The Authorities have therefore made valiant attempts to reduce the thing to a human context, where such concepts as Justice, Reason, Progress could be employed. Such moral defences are offered as: the war was shortened and many lives, Japanese as well as American, saved; "we" had to invent and use The Bomb against "them" lest "they" invent and use it against "us"; the Japanese deserved it because they started the war, treated prisoners barbarously, etc., or because they refused to surrender. The flimsiness of these justifications is apparent; *any* atrocious action, absolutely *any* one, could be excused on such grounds. For there is really only one possible answer to the problem posed by Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor: if all mankind could realize eternal and complete happiness by torturing to death a single child, would this act be morally justified?

Somewhat subtler is the strategy by which The Authorities—by which term I mean not only the political leaders but also the scientists, intellectuals, trade-unionists, and businessmen who function on the top levels of our society—tried to ease the deep fears aroused in everyone by The Bomb. From President Truman down, they emphasized that The Bomb has been produced in the normal, orderly course of scientific experiment, that it is thus simply the latest step in man's long struggle to control the forces of nature, in a word that it is Progress. But this is a knife that cuts both ways: the effect on me, at least, was to intensify some growing doubts about the "Scientific Progress" which had whelped this monstrosity. Last April, I noted that in our movies

"the white coat of the scientist is as blood-chilling a sight as Dracula's black cape. . . . If the scientist's laboratory has

acquired in Popular Culture a ghastly atmosphere, is this not perhaps one of those deep intuitions of the masses? From Frankenstein's laboratory to Maidanek [or, now, to Hanford and Oak Ridge] is not a long journey. Was there a popular suspicion, perhaps only half conscious, that the 19th-century trust in science was mistaken . . .?"

These questions seem more and more relevant. I doubt if we shall get satisfactory answers from the scientists (who, indeed, seem professionally incapable even of asking, let alone answering, them). The greatest of them all, who in 1905 constructed the equation which provided the theoretical basis for Atomic Fission, could think of nothing better to tell us after the bombings than: "No one in the world should have any fear or apprehension about atomic energy being a supernatural product. In developing atomic energy, science merely imitated the reaction of the sun's rays. ["Merely" is good!—DM] Atomic power is no more unnatural than when I sail my boat on Saranac Lake." Thus, Albert Einstein. As though it were not precisely the natural, the perfectly rational and scientifically demonstrable that is now chilling our blood! How human, intimate, friendly by comparison are ghosts, witches, spells, werewolves, and poltergeists! Indeed, all of us except a few specialists know as much about witches as we do about atom-splitting; and all of us with no exceptions are even less able to defend ourselves against The Bomb than against witchcraft. No silver bullet, no crossed sticks will help us there. As though to demonstrate this, Einstein himself, when asked about the unknown radioactive poisons which were beginning to alarm even editorial writers, replied "emphatically": "I will not discuss that." Such emphasis is not reassuring.

Nor was President Truman reassuring when he pointed out: "This development, which was carried forward by the many thousand participants with the utmost energy and the very highest sense of national duty . . . probably represents the greatest achievement of the combined efforts of science, industry, labour, and the military in all history." Nor Professor

Smyth: "The weapon has been created not by the devilish inspiration of some warped genius but by the arduous labour of thousands of normal men and women working for the safety of their country." Again, the effort to "humanize" The Bomb by showing how it fits into our normal, everyday life also cuts the other way: it reveals how inhuman our normal life has become.

The pulp writers could imagine things like the atom bomb; in fact, life is becoming more and more like a Science Fiction story, and the arrival on earth of a few six-legged Martians with Death Rays would hardly make the front page. But the pulp writers' imaginations were limited; *their* atom-bombs were created by "devilish" and "warped" geniuses, not by "thousands of normal men and women"—including some of the most eminent scientists of our time, the labour movement (the Army "warmly" thanked the AFL and the CIO for achieving "what at times seemed impossible provision of adequate manpower"), various great corporations (DuPont, Eastman, Union Carbon & Carbide), and the president of Harvard University.

Only a handful, of course, knew what they were creating. None of the 125,000 construction and factory workers knew. Only three of the plane crew that dropped the first bomb knew what they were letting loose. It hardly needs to be stressed that there is something askew with a society in which vast numbers of citizens can be organized to create a horror like The Bomb without even knowing they are doing it. What real content, in such a case, can be assigned to notions like "democracy" and "government of, by and for the people"? The good Professor Smyth expresses the opinion that "the people of this country" should decide for themselves about the future development of The Bomb. To be sure, no vote was taken on the creation and employment of the weapon. However, says the Professor reassuringly, these questions "have been seriously considered by all concerned [i.e., by the handful of citizens who were permitted to know what was going on] and vigorously debated among the scientists, and the conclusions reached have been passed along to the highest authorities.

"These questions are not technical questions; they are political and social questions, and the answers given to them may affect all mankind for generations. In thinking about them, the men on the project have been thinking as citizens of the United States vitally interested in the welfare of the human race. It has been their duty and that of the responsible high Government officials who were informed to look beyond the limits of the present war and its weapons to the ultimate implications of these discoveries. This was a heavy responsibility.

"In a free country like ours, such questions should be debated by the people and decisions must be made by the people through their representatives."

It would be unkind to subject the above to critical analysis beyond noting that every statement of what-is contradicts every statement of what-should-be.

Atomic fission makes me sympathize, for the first time, with the old Greek notion of *Hubris*, that lack of restraint in success which invited the punishment of the gods. Some scientist remarked the other day that it was fortunate that the only atom we as yet know how to split is that of uranium, a rare substance; for if we should learn how to split the atom of iron or some other common ore, the chain reaction might flash through vast areas and the molten interior of the globe come flooding out to put an end to us and our Progress. It is *Hubris* when President Truman declares: "The force from which the sun draws its powers has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East." Or when the *Times* editorialist echoes: "The American answer to Japan's contemptuous rejection of the Allied surrender ultimatum of July 26 has now been delivered upon Japanese soil in the shape of a new weapon which unleashes against it the forces of the universe." Invoking the Forces of the Universe to back up the ultimatum of July 26 is rather like getting in God to tidy up the living-room.

It seems fitting that The Bomb was not developed by any of the totalitarian powers, where the political atmosphere might

at first glance seem to be more suited to it, but by the two "democracies", the last major powers to continue to pay at least ideological respect to the humanitarian-democratic tradition. It also seems fitting that the heads of these governments, by the time The Bomb exploded, were not Roosevelt and Churchill, figures of a certain historial and personal stature, but Attlee and Truman, both colourless mediocrities, Average Men elevated to their positions by the mechanics of the system. All this emphasizes that perfect automatism, that absolute lack of human consciousness or aims which our society is rapidly achieving. As a uranium "pile", once the elements have been brought together, inexorably runs through a series of "chain reactions" until the final explosion takes place, so the elements of our society act and react, regardless of ideologies or personalities, until The Bomb explodes over Hiroshima. The more commonplace the personalities and senseless the institutions, the more grandiose the destruction. It is *Gottterdammerung* without the gods.

The scientists themselves whose brain-work produced The Bomb appear not as creators but as raw material, to be hauled about and exploited like uranium ore. Thus, Dr. Otto Hahn, the German scientist who in 1939 first split the uranium atom and who did his best to present Hitler with an atom bomb, has been brought over to this country to pool his knowledge with our own atomic "team" (which includes several Jewish refugees who were kicked out of Germany by Hitler). Thus Professor Kaputza, Russia's leading experimenter with uranium, was decoyed from Cambridge University in the thirties back to his native land, and, once there, refused permission to return. Thus a recent report from Yugoslavia tells of some eminent native atom-splitter being high-jacked by the Red Army (just like a valuable machine tool) and rushed by plane to Moscow.

Insofar as there is any moral responsibility assignable for The Bomb, it rests with those scientists who developed it and those political and military leaders who employed it. Since the rest of us Americans did not even know what was

being done in our name—let alone have the slightest possibility of stopping it—The Bomb becomes the most dramatic illustration to date of the fallacy of “The Responsibility of Peoples”.

Yet how can even those immediately concerned be held responsible? A general's function is to win wars, a president's or prime minister's to defend the interests of the ruling class he represents, a scientist's to extend the frontiers of knowledge; how can any of them, then, draw the line at the atom bomb, or indeed anywhere, regardless of their “personal feelings”? The dilemma is absolute, when posed in these terms. The social order is an impersonal mechanism, the war is an impersonal process, and they grind along automatically; if some of the human parts rebel at their function, they will be replaced by more amenable ones; and their rebellion will mean that they are simply thrust aside, without changing anything. The Marxists say this must be so until there is a revolutionary change; but such a change never seemed farther away. What, then, can a man do *now*? How can he escape playing his part in the ghastly process?

Quite simply by not playing it. Many eminent scientists, for example, worked on The Bomb: Fermi of Italy, Bohr of Denmark, Chadwick of England, Oppenheimer, Urey, and Compton of USA. It is fair to expect such men, of great knowledge and intelligence, to be aware of the consequences of their actions. And they seem to have been so. Dr. Smyth observes: “Initially, many scientists could and did hope that some principle would emerge which would prove that atomic bombs were inherently impossible. The hope has faded gradually. . . .” Yet they all accepted the “assignment”, and produced The Bomb. Why? Because they thought of themselves as specialists, technicians, and not as complete men. Specialists in the sense that the process of scientific discovery is considered to be morally neutral, so that the scientist may deplore the uses to which his discoveries are put by the generals and politicians but may not refuse to make them for that reason; and specialists also in that they reacted to the war as partisans of one side, whose function was the narrow one of de-

feating the Axis governments even if it meant sacrificing their broader responsibilities as human beings.

But, fortunately for the honour of science, a number of scientists refused to take part in the project. I have heard of several individual cases over here, and Sir James Chadwick has revealed "that some of his colleagues refused to work on the atomic bomb for fear they might be creating a planet-destroying monster". These scientists reacted as whole men, not as special-ists or part-isans. Today the tendency is to think of peoples as responsible and individuals as irresponsible. The reversal of both these conceptions is the first condition of escaping the present decline to barbarism. The more each individual thinks and behaves as a whole Man (hence responsibly) rather than as a specialized part of some nation or profession (hence irresponsibly), the better hope for the future. To insist on acting as a responsible individual in a society which reduces the individual to impotence may be foolish, reckless, and ineffectual; or it may be wise, prudent and effective. But whichever it is, only thus is there a chance of changing our present tragic destiny. All honour then to the as yet anonymous British and American scientists—Men I would rather say—who were so wisely foolish as to refuse their co-operation on The Bomb! This is "resistance", this is "negativism", and in it lies our best hope.

September, 1945

THE NEW YORKER did a bold thing when it devoted its entire issue of August 31 to John Hersey's long reportage piece on Hiroshima. It was also a useful thing, judging by the popular sensation the issue seems to have caused. For what Hersey tried to do was to "bring home" to the American reader just what the bomb did to the human beings who lived in Hiroshima. The device he used was at once obvious (yet no one else thought of doing it) and journalistically effective: to interview a half-dozen of the survivors some months later, and reconstruct in intimate human detail just what each of them did, felt, and thought from the time of the dropping of the bomb until he interviewed them. As I say, his piece apparently affected a

great many readers. But I must note that it didn't for some reason affect me; in fact, I found it so dull that I stopped reading it half-way through. For one thing, I don't like *The New Yorker's* suave, toned-down, underplayed kind of naturalism (it might be called "denatured naturalism", as against the cruder—and, to me, preferable—variety of Dreiser and the early Farrell). For another, Hersey is feeble as an artist, with no style, no ideas, no feelings of any intensity, and no eye for the one detail that imaginatively creates a whole; so he puts in everything, which gives a relaxed monotonous effect; I could not help thinking what the Hemingway who described the Caporetto retreat would have done with the theme, and in a fourth the space. These defects of art produce, and are produced by, what seems to me a moral deficiency: the dead-pan, keyed-down approach is so detached from the persons Hersey is writing about that they become objects of clinical description; the author appears like a specialist lecturing on some disease, with "interesting" cases on the platform. The "little people" of Hiroshima whose sufferings Hersey records in antiseptic *New Yorker* prose might just as well be white mice, for all the pity, horror, or indignation the reader—or at least this reader—is made to feel for them. And yet Hersey's intention, which apparently was successfully communicated to many thousands of other readers, was to convey precisely such emotions. It is puzzling. Perhaps my feeling is simply that naturalism is no longer adequate, either æsthetically or morally, to cope with the modern horrors.

October, 1946

THE PROGRESSIVES' favourite apology for the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was that it shortened the war and thus saved lives. This kind of reasoning, of course, can be used to justify almost any atrocity. But it is beginning to appear, in addition, that Japan was beaten *before* the atomic bombings, and that her rulers knew this and were frantically trying to make peace. Two recent statements by high U.S. military figures are interesting in this connection:

Admiral Halsey, not precisely a humanitarian, said: "The first atomic bomb was an unnecessary experiment. It was a mistake ever to drop it. Why disclose a weapon like that to the world when it wasn't necessary? The scientists had this toy and they wanted to try it out, so they dropped it. It killed a lot of Japs, but the Japs had put out peace feelers through Russia long before."

And Admiral Blandy, who was in charge of the Bikini tests, said that a "virile nation" would endure a lot of atomic bombing even after its main cities were destroyed. "I cannot believe that it would surrender while its fighting forces were intact—its armies, fleets, its bombs, its launching platforms. Japan lost her means of resistance before the atomic bomb was dropped."

November, 1946

THE PACIFIST DILEMMA

[I THINK the point at which I began to stop believing in pacifism as a political doctrine was the Russian blockade of Berlin. In the Summer, 1948, issue of Politics I asked, and answered, some questions as to my crumbling convictions.]

SHOULD the Western powers withdraw their troops from Berlin?

To do this as part of a general pacifist programme would be good. But if it is done, it will not be a symbol of pacifist-socialist revolution but simply a tactical move by militarist-capitalist governments. It would mean just what Munich meant: not peace-in-our-time but appeasement, and would thus strengthen, not weaken, the Stalin regime. Furthermore, such a move would not awaken any reaction in the Russian army or people, and would hand over to the Russians for punishment thousands of Berliners who have so courageously indicated their preference for the West's imperfect democracy against the East's perfect tyranny. This betrayal, aside from its moral aspects, would hardly encourage the rest of Europe to resist the spread of Communism.*

Assuming a pacifist revolution in the West, would this not merely insure the world triumph of Russian totalitarianism?

First, let me say that pacifism to me means to resist Stalin-

* This reply is not very satisfactory, from a pacifist standpoint. The fact is that there is no pacifist (or socialist) answer to the question of Berlin, just as there wasn't to Munich. As a pacifist, I cannot say, Don't Yield, since the consequences might be war—though I think they would not be—and it is irresponsible to support an action without being willing to support its possible consequences. On the other hand, a pacifist for the reasons given above cannot recommend getting out of Berlin either (any more than he could have recommended, though many pacifists mistakenly did, giving Czechoslovakia to Hitler as a step towards either peace or justice). Such situations, and they are increasing, are dilemmas for the pacifists or socialists. They call into doubt, in my mind at least, the political validity of a "Utopian", or ultimacist, position today.

ism, not to submit to it. The resistance is non-violent because I think it is immoral to kill or injure others, and because, on the political level, warfare has become too destructive and ghastly to hope for good results from it, and war means killing precisely our best allies against Stalinism, namely the people of Russia, who are the chief victims of Stalin's system, but whom the fires of war would weld closer to the Kremlin.

Pacifism does assume that not in the leaders but in the ranks of the enemy there is something similar to itself to which it can appeal, whether innate human feelings or an ethical-cultural tradition. That is, that we pacifists can count on a so-to-speak fifth column of brotherly love and reason and respect for truth and justice working for us behind the enemy lines. And that this fifth column can be stirred into action if we reveal unmistakably that it has already conquered in our own minds and hearts. Does this fifth column exist in the Russians today? That is a very speculative question.

Let us dismiss, first, the illusion of some of the more innocent pacifists that it exists in comrades Stalin, Molotov, Vishinsky, *et al.* These gentlemen would interpret any showing of brotherly love by the West as simply weakness, and would take advantage of a pacifist revolution to occupy Europe and the USA preliminary to instituting a People's Progressive Order. But would the Red Army march? And, if it would, what prospects are there that its soldiers, and the population back home in Russia, would be won over to our side by pacifist tactics?

Human beings do respond to love; they do have a feeling for truth and justice; they do dislike authority and repression; they do have prejudices against murder. They also have the reverse of these instincts, of course, but at least *both* tendencies exist, and one can choose which to appeal to. The Stalin regime has done its best to bring out in the Russians the reverse of the feelings listed above. How successful has it been? On the one hand, there is the barbarous behaviour of the Red Army in Germany and Eastern Europe; the absence of rebellion inside Russia; the cynicism and apathy shown in the documents on Russian life printed in the last issue. On the other, there is the

fact of large-scale desertions from the Red Army, of episodes like the Kosenkina case, of the distaste for the regime also shown in the documents printed last issue. The current defiance of Russian totalitarianism by large numbers of Berliners—quite unexpected by the Western authorities and newspapermen there—may be a sign that twelve years of Nazism have not too profoundly reshaped the German people. But Stalin has been in power for twenty years, and has enjoyed a much more complete and intimate control than Hitler did. The very completeness of his control makes it hard to evaluate its effects on the Russian people, since they are deprived of all possible outlets of self-expression. Except the jokes. Perhaps here is a sign of the existence of our fifth column!

In any case, we can say that the political leaders of USA have made no effort to see whether this fifth column exists or not. Their policy is static, unimaginative, niggardly, unfeeling. As their “unconditional surrender” policy plus the saturation bombings forced the German people to stick to Hitler to the end, so they are now solidifying the Russians behind Stalin. Except for the happy inspiration of the Marshall Plan—and even that is now in danger of being superseded by military expenditures—the US Congress and State Department have made no appeal to the imagination of the peoples of Europe and USSR. A nation which refuses to permit more than a token immigration of DP’s, and that only under the most humiliating conditions, offers little encouragement to such dissident potentialities as there may be inside USSR today.

What about the chances of the American people adopting, in the face of the Soviet threat, an attitude of non-violent resistance?

Slight. The practice of loving, non-violent resistance towards one’s enemies is a difficult discipline which even Gandhi, despite his leadership of a great mass movement, proved to have been unable to implant in the Indian masses. As he himself—unlike our own pacifist sectarians—recognized in the last year of his life, the communal massacres showed that his life work had been a failure in this respect. The American temperament would seem to be less receptive to non-violence than the Indian; certainly there is no such popular tradition of it as in

India. Also, the British authorities were themselves bound by a moral code which had some similarity to that of Gandhi's, whereas the Soviet authorities are not so bound.

If your chief political objective today is the overthrow of Stalinism, and if you do not think either pacifism or socialism can give answers to the specific political issues—such as whether the US army should get out of Berlin or not—which arise in the course of the fight, and if war seems the most likely final upshot of the kind of resistance the West, as now constituted (and you see little hope of a basic change before World War III), offers; then will you not support World War III when and if it comes?

No.

Why not?

Because I agree with Simone Weil that the methods that must be used in fighting a modern war are so atrocious and clash so fundamentally with the ends I favour as to make impossible the achieving of those ends. Specifically, the mass slaughter of the enemy population by atomic bombing and bacteriological warfare, and the destruction of the fabric of Western civilization if not of the globe itself.

The usual argument for supporting war today is that if someone comes to burn down your house and kill your family, you have a right to kill him in order to prevent this. But this analogy, so persuasive to the popular mind, is misleading because it leaves out of account the chief difference between such a situation and the wars of our time. If you kill someone to prevent him burning your house and killing your children, the result is that your house is not burned and your children are not killed. But war today seems to bring about just what it is allegedly fought to prevent. After Hitler is defeated, the same evils reappear with the hammer and sickle on their caps instead of the swastika. And the moral and physical destruction employed to defeat Hitler has mounted to a total comparable to the hypothetical damage which the war was fought in order to avoid. A better analogy would be: The proprietor of a china shop battles a gang intent on breaking his china. But the encounter is so furious that most of the china is broken anyway; in fact, the proprietor himself seizes some of the

most precious items in his stock to smash over the heads of the attackers.

Then if both violence and non-violence, for different reasons, seem impractical today, you are in a dilemma?

Yes.

“I CHOOSE THE WEST”

[IN THE WINTER of 1952, I debated Norman Mailer at Mt. Holyoke College; my position was summed up; “I Choose the West”; his: “I Cannot Choose”. This is the gist of what I said.]

I choose the West—the U.S. and its allies—and reject the East—the Soviet Union and its ally, China, and its colonial provinces, the nations of Eastern Europe. By “choosing” I mean that I support the political, economic, and military struggle of the West against the East. I support it critically—I’m against the Smith and McCarran Acts, French policy in Indo-China, etc.—but in general I *do* choose, I *do* support Western policies.

During the last war, I did not choose, at first because I was a revolutionary socialist of Trotskyist coloration, later because I was becoming, especially after the atom bomb, a pacifist. Neither of these positions now appear valid to me.

The revolutionary socialist position assumes there is a reasonable chance that some kind of popular revolution, a Third Camp independent of the warring sides and hostile to both, will arise during or after the war, as was the case in Russia in March, 1917. Nothing of the sort happened in the last war, despite even greater destruction and chaos than in 1917–18, because the power vacuum was filled at once by either Soviet or American imperialism. The Third Camp of the masses just doesn’t exist any more, and so Lenin’s “revolutionary defeatism” now becomes simply defeatism: it helps the enemy win and that’s all.

As for pacifism, it assumes some degree of ethical similarity in the enemy, something in his heart that can be appealed to—or at least something in his traditions. Gandhi found this in the British, so his passive resistance movement could succeed, since there were certain repressive measures, such as executing him and his chief co-workers, which the British were inhibited from using by their traditional moral code, which is that of

Western civilization in general. But the Soviet Communists are not so inhibited, nor were the Nazis. So I conclude that pacifism does not have a reasonable chance of being effective against a totalitarian enemy. Pacifism as a matter of individual conscience, as a *moral* rather than a *political* question, is another thing, and I respect it.

I choose the West because I see the present conflict not as another struggle between basically similar imperialisms as was World War I but as a fight to the death between radically different cultures. In the West, since the Renaissance and the Reformation, we have created a civilization which puts a high value on the individual, which has to some extent replaced dogmatic authority with scientific knowledge, which since the 18th century has progressed from slavery and serfdom to some degree of political liberty, and which has produced a culture which, while not as advanced as that of the ancient Greeks, still has some appealing features. I think Soviet Communism breaks sharply with this evolution, that it is a throwback not to the relatively humane middle ages but to the great slave societies of Egypt and the Orient.

Nor are the Communists content, or indeed able, to confine this 20th-century slave system to Russia or even to the vast new provinces in Asia and Eastern Europe added since 1945. Like Nazism, Soviet Communism is a young, aggressive, expansive imperialism (as against, for instance, the elderly British imperialism, which since 1945 has permitted India, Egypt, and Iran to escape from its grip). Also like Nazism, it represses its own population so brutally that it must always be "defending" itself against alleged foreign enemies—else its subjects would ask why such enormous sacrifices are needed. The rulers of Soviet Russia will consider they are encircled by threatening invaders so long as a single country in the world is left that is independent of them. A reader asked the Moscow *Bolshevik* recently: "Now that we control a third of the world, can we still speak of capitalist encirclement?" The editors replied: "Capitalist encirclement is a political term. Comrade Stalin has stated that capitalist encirclement cannot be considered a geographical notion." (Thus the existence of a UN army on the Korean

peninsula constitutes a *political* encirclement of Communist China.) Furthermore, precisely because the bourgeois West is so obviously superior, in most of the spiritual and material things that people value, to the Communized East, the mere *existence* of a non-Communist country is a danger to Communism. This was shown in 1945-6 when the Red Army troops returned from their contact with Europe "infected with bourgeois ideology"—i.e., they had seen how much more free the masses outside Russia are and how much higher their standard of living is—and had to be quarantined in remote districts for a while.

In choosing the West, I must admit that already the effects on our own society of the anti-Communist struggle are bad: Senator McCarthy and his imitators are using lies to create hysteria and moral confusion in the best Nazi-Communist pattern; building a great military machine cannot but extend the power of the State and so encroach on freedom. In short, we are becoming to some extent like the totalitarian enemy we are fighting. But (1) being on the road is not the same thing as being there already (though one might think it was from certain Marxist and pacifist statements), and (2) this malign trend can be to some extent resisted.

After all, here and in Western Europe there still exist different political parties, free trade unions, and other social groupings independent of the State; varied and competing intellectual and artistic tendencies; and the protection, by law and by tradition, of those individual civil rights on which all the rest depend. Ours is still a living, developing society, open to change and growth, at least compared to its opposite number beyond the Elbe.

When Ulysses made his journey to the Elysian Fields, he saw among the shades his old comrade-in-arms, Achilles, and asked him how are things? Achilles' answer was: "I would rather be the slave of a landless man in the country of the living than the ruler of the kingdom of the dead." This is my feeling. I prefer an imperfectly living, open society to a perfectly dead, closed society. We may become like Russia, but we may not—the issue is not settled so long as we are

independent of Moscow. If Moscow wins, the door is slammed shut, and to open it again would be a more difficult and brutal business than is now required by the measures to keep it open.

[*The following was written in 1953.*]

If it comes to another world war, I think we are done for, all of us. In supporting measures of opposition, including military ones as in Korea, against the Communists, I reason that the best chance of postponing war and perhaps avoiding it altogether is for the West to keep up its military strength and to be prepared to counter force with force. Appeasement didn't work with the Nazis and it won't work with the Communists. I admit that the results of the Korean war have been disastrous, especially for the Korean people; if I were a South Korean, I'm not sure I should have not preferred to have just let the North Koreans take over peacefully. Yet perhaps, in terms of world politics, the results of not making a fight to defend the Korean Republic would have been even more disastrous, like the results of letting Hitler absorb the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia without a fight.

Perhaps there is no solution any longer to these agonizing problems. Certainly the actual workings of history today yield an increasing number of situations in which *all* the real alternatives (as against the theoretically possible ones) seem hopeless. The reason such historical problems are insoluble now is that there have been so many crimes, mistakes, and failures since 1914, and each one making the solution of the next problem that much more difficult, that by now there are no uncorrupted, unshattered forces for good left with which to work. A decent social order in Europe after the first world war, for instance, would have made Hitler's rise impossible; even after he took power, a Loyalist victory in the Spanish Civil War or some radical reforms in France by Leon Blum's *Front Populaire* would have made his position very difficult. But none of these things happened, and when the *Reichswehr* marched into Poland, what solution was possible? Some of us felt it was our duty as socialists to "oppose the war", i.e., to refuse to fight the

Nazis under the flags of existing governments; we also had illusions about the historical possibility of a "third camp" of the common people arising and making it possible to fight the Nazis with clean hands, so to speak. But this alternative, it is now clear, existed only on the ethical and ideological plane; it had no existence on the historical level. The only historically real alternatives in 1939 were to back Hitler's armies, to back the Allies' armies, or to do nothing. But none of these alternatives promised any great benefit for mankind, and the one that finally triumphed has led simply to the replacing of the Nazi threat by the Communist threat, with the whole ghastly newsreel flickering through once more in a second showing.

This is one reason I am less interested in politics than I used to be.

From "*The Root Is Man*", 1953.

THE CULTURAL FRONT

MR. VAN WYCK BROOKS AND KULTURBOLSCHEWISMUS

IN THE PERIOD of reaction we are living through, it is peculiarly unfortunate that, as Dos Passos remarks in the introduction to his latest book, "Americans as a people notably lack a sense of history." For the modern intellectual needs a sixth sense if he is to survive—the historical sense. Confronted by a frustrating historical situation—the breakdown of the political, social, and cultural values of the bourgeois order, and the simultaneous impotence of any progressive revolutionary force to sweep clear the debris—our intellectuals have for the most part either tried to find their way back to the long discredited values of the bourgeoisie, or else have begun to move towards a totalitarian "solution". But for the values they instinctively want to preserve, both roads lead to historical dead ends.

The swing back to bourgeois values has been up to now much the stronger. It has caught up almost all the old intellectual leaders of the left wing. Lewis Corey, whom we once looked to as the outstanding Marxist economist, has discovered "the industrial capitalist virtues—however imperfectly realized—of production for welfare, democracy, and peace" (*Nation*, May 19th, 1941). Louis M. Hacker, once the "coming" Marxist historian, has also discovered the virtues of "industrial" as against "finance" capitalism (as Hitler did years ago) and now regards Rockefeller as "a great industrial innovator" who "conformed to the pattern of the enterpriser of classical economics" (*Nation*, December 7, 1940). Sidney Hook, once the leading Marxist philosopher, has swung away from Marx towards John Dewey and celebrates all kinds of extremely vague beauties in capitalist bourgeois democracy (*New Leader*, passim). John Dos Passos, the "irresponsible" chronicler of the last war, flies to England, fittingly accompanied by Thornton Wilder, to help the P.E.N. Club win this one. Max Eastman, the hero of

the old *Masses* trial, the gay rebel, the original American Trotskyist, writes war propaganda and publishes an attack on socialism which Wendell Willkie implores every good American to read and which is the low-water mark to date in such affairs for vulgarity and just plain silliness (*Reader's Digest*, June, 1941).

This tendency is nothing new, nor is it of itself especially dangerous, since the values these writers are trying to revive are quite beyond the aid of their oxygen tanks. In this article I want to analyze the other and newer and much more ominous tendency, which seems to me most significantly expressed to date in a recent paper of Van Wyck Brooks—the tendency to rally to the concepts of Hitler's and (Stalin's) "new order".

Van Wyck Brooks' speech * was a Dadaist gesture in reverse. Dadaist in the furious invective, the wild statements, the general air of provocative hyperbole; only the madly ringing alarm clocks to interrupt the speaker and the stench bombs to drive out the audience were lacking. In reverse because the apparatus was turned *in defence of* bourgeois-Philistine values. The comparison is unfair to the Dadaists, whose antics were both logical and deliberate. Brooks was apparently serious in his clowning.

The paper is built around an antithesis between "primary" and "secondary" writers. The former is "a great man writing", "one who bespeaks the collective life of the people" by celebrating "the great themes . . . by virtue of which the race has risen—courage, justice, mercy, honour, love". He is positive, constructive, optimistic, popular. He believes in "the idea of progress". Above all, he is primary. The "secondary", or "coterie", writer, on the other hand, is a thin-blooded, niggling sort of fellow, whose work reaches "a mere handful of readers". His stuff has brilliant "form" but lacks "content". He is "a mere artificer or master of words", who perversely celebrates the "death-drive" instead of the "life-drive". He is a doubter, a scorner, a sceptic, expatriate, highbrow and city slicker. His

* "Primary Literature and Coterie Literature", a paper delivered at the Second Annual Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, at Columbia University, New York City, on September 10, 1941. I am indebted to Dr. Louis Finkelstein, of the Conference, for a copy of the paper and of Thomas Mann's letter of comment.

work is pessimistic and has lost contact with The People and The Idea of Greatness. He is, above all, secondary.

Brooks does not hesitate to name names, as follows.* *Primary*: Tolstoi, Milton, Erasmus, Dickens, Rabelais, Dostoievsky, Socrates, Goethe, Ibsen, Whitman, Hugo, Emerson, Whittier, and Thomas Mann. (Critics: Arnold, Taine, Renan, Sainte-Beuve.) *Secondary*: Joyce, Proust, Valéry, Pound, Eliot, James, Dryden, Nietzsche, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Farrell, Hemingway, Dos Passos, and Gertrude Stein. (Critics: Eliot, Richards, Winters, Pound, Tate, Ransom.)

This is childishness, ignorance, nonsense, what you please, but it is unhappily symptomatic of much more than Brooks' own mentality. It is the boldest statement to date of that cultural counter-revolution opened by Archibald MacLeish's attack on the "irresponsibles". And what are we to make of Brooks' side remark in his speech that Edmund Wilson, of all people, "partially agrees with me"? Or of Thomas Mann's extraordinary comment on the paper, which I think worth reproducing in full:

It strikes me as a piece of daring, intelligent, and aggressive criticism; I have been well entertained by it without considering myself justified to give it a Yes or No. Above all I must admit that I am not sufficiently familiar with Eliot's work to be able to judge whether the extraordinary hostility which Van Wyck Brooks feels for this author is justified or not. I am tolerant by nature and look at things with an eye to gain from them the best for my own education; I would never have the courage to express such contempt for Joyce, Valéry, etc., as the author does.

In the main, he is undoubtedly right when he says that in our present epoch only a few primary and truly great poets and authors represent and embody the spirit and the experience of our time. The others do work which probably also has to be done, but is not creative in the true sense, and they are certainly not entitled to lack respect for the great

* For this list I have also drawn on a speech Brooks gave a year ago at Hunter College (published as "On Literature Today"), in which he first developed his thesis, though in much more genial and cautious terms.

representatives of tradition. I believe, however, that this difference between the real leaders of a culture and its average servants and carriers has existed at all times, and is no particular sign of our epoch.

It is clear that Mann is somewhat uneasy about Brooks' paper; his comment is the most shameful kind of equivocation. He is "not familiar" with Eliot's work—what amazing ignorance in one who aspires to be the 20th-century Goethe! He is "tolerant" of Joyce, Valéry, "etc."—what impudent condescension! The second paragraph of his letter is pure double-talk: of course there are only "a few primary and truly great" creators in every age, but the question is precisely does Mann agree with Brooks' definition of who these are today? The implication, which he lacks courage to state openly, is that he does. But Mann read Brooks hastily when he speaks of "a few" great creators. Brooks mentions *only one* of our age, and that one happens to be none other than . . . Thomas Mann. So we see Mann accepting the flattery and assenting to Brooks' barbaric attack on all the other great writers of our age.

The most obvious comment on the two lists of writers given above is also the most important: all the primary writers except Mann* are of the past, while the scope of the "coterie" classification includes practically every significant modern writer, of every school from Paul Valéry to James T. Farrell. Now it would be logically *possible* that many writers in the past and no writers today might measure up to a given æsthetic standard. But Brooks is not making an æsthetic judgment—in fact one of his chief quarrels with the coterie writers is their preoccupation with "mere" æsthetics. He is making a *historical* judgment: he claims that Eliot, Joyce, and the rest are bad writers because they don't truly render the "sense of the age". This is the point at issue. For, if we overlook the crudity of

* This exception is in appearance only. Brooks dubs Mann "primary" not because of his *work*, which is patently "secondary" in its pessimism, scepticism, and world-weariness, but because of his *ego*, because "the Goethe-intoxicated Mann" alone of modern writers is preoccupied with "the idea of greatness". What irony, that the foible of a great creative talent, which leads him to pose as *Goethe redivivus*, should be to Brooks precisely Mann's passport to the ranks of the "primary" writers!

Brooks' formulations, we can agree with him that the coterie writers don't believe in progress and the "march of humanity", that they are inclined to be sceptical and critical, that they are not at all popular and that they represent the end and not the beginning of a culture. But the real questions are: Is their scepticism justified? Are their audiences small because popular cultural values are debased or because they perversely prefer to isolate themselves from "humanity"? Is bourgeois society—which I assume Brooks would grant is the society of the period and writers in question—dying, or is it entering on a new life?

For all his boldness, Brooks nowhere dares to assert that bourgeois society in this century is in a flourishing condition. He simply *assumes* this crucial point—or, more accurately, doesn't seem aware it *is* crucial, and that writers can be expected to exhibit his "primary" virtues only in a "primary" historical period. Here his historical illiteracy stands him in good stead. For he is actually able to believe that the specific values of the last century are eternal values, and that Homer, Rabelais, Erasmus, Milton, and Dostoevsky all wore the spiritual costume of Victorian humanitarianism. "Tradition," he states flatly, "implies that mankind is marching forward." And: "This mood of health, will, courage, faith in human nature is the dominant mood in the history of literature."

"Thirty years ago, when I began to write," remarked Brooks wistfully in his Hunter College speech, "the future was an exciting and hopeful vista: Everyone believed in evolution as a natural social process. We took the end for granted. Mankind was marching forward." Facing a world in which such beliefs are violently in conflict with reality, and unable or unwilling to change them, Brooks is forced to denounce as somehow responsible for this reality those writers whose work most truthfully reflects it. It is a particularly neat example of how an originally progressive ideology becomes reactionary when it is carried over into a later period. Van Wyck Brooks has become, doubtless with the best intentions, our leading mouthpiece for totalitarian cultural values. For the spirit in which such great creative works as *Ulysses*, *The Golden Bowl*, *Death in Venice*, *Swann's Way*, and *The Wasteland* are conceived is that

of free inquiry and criticism, and it must always and in every instance result in exposing the overmastering reality of our age: the decomposition of the bourgeois synthesis in all fields. The final turn of the screw is that Brooks, like MacLeish, in attacking those whose work exposes this decomposition, himself expresses its farthest totalitarian reach. We can now understand his close relations with the Stalinist literary front, his chauvinistic leanings of late years, and his famous proposal that "committees be formed in towns to make house-to-house collections of objects made in Germany, which might be destroyed in public bonfires. . . . If these mass demonstrations were on a scale sufficiently large, they would suggest that democracy has something to say" (Letter to *Time*, December 5, 1938). Hitler also has something to say, in these terms, and has said it.

To explain how it is that the greatest writers of the age don't possess the "sense of the age", Brooks constructs the theory that a clique of mediocrities have somehow seized control of modern literature and imposed on it a set of "secondary" values which effectively prevents anyone (except Van Wyck Brooks) from perceiving that they themselves are just not up to the "primary" standard. "That certain minds are dominant does not mean that these are the minds which possess the sense of the age. They may be only the most articulate. . . . These coterie writers have expressed a moment in which they have caught humanity napping." It is all a tragic historical *accident*—like an automobile smash-up. In an incredibly venomous and silly passage he calls James and Eliot "little Jack Horners" who sit in a corner and gloat over their little plums of style. "Meantime they forget that they are in a corner, while the centre of the room is occupied by someone else. But the someone in the centre sits in the place of humanity, and he has the final word." The object of the grand conspiracy—he actually refers to "James Joyce, who conspired with Eliot to destroy tradition"—is to "cut away the standard by which they can be measured as the minor poets and novelists they most assuredly are". Elsewhere he refers to "international mystagogues"—this note of xenophobia recurs throughout the paper—"concerned, above everything else, for their own prestige; for, as mal-

adjusted persons they are insecure, and, being insecure, they develop a morbid will-to-power". This is an eminent literary critic writing in the year 1941! *

At one point in his tirade, Brooks recalls, a bit uneasily one suspects, that his subject-matter is after all literature. "But are not some of them beautiful writers? Who can deny this? I enjoy their artistry as much as any man living." But what shall we say of the sensibility of a literary critic who reacts to the playful and wonderfully skilful parody section in *Ulysses* in these terms:

Has he not in the "Oxen of the Sun" episode run through the whole of English literature, depreciating with his parodies its greatest authors, deforming every one of them—Gibbon, Burke, Goldsmith, Lamb, De Quincy, Dickens, Ruskin, Burns and a dozen others? What fools he makes them seem as he fills his travesties of their styles with trivial and salacious implications!—and all for the glorification of James Joyce. For what a big boy he must be to put all these authors in their places!

Here we have the accusation of petty vanity—so often repeated as to appear to be an obsession—and the insensibility to specifically *literary* values already noted, combined with a Victorian squeamishness ("salacious implications") and a feeling that any adverse criticism of the great writers of the past is *irreverent* and a blow at "tradition". Brooks is shocked by Joyce's paraphrase of Newman's hymn, "Lead, kindly foul!" and his: "Greater love than this no man hath than that a man lay down his wife for a friend. Go thou and do likewise." He is shocked by the freedom with which Pound and Eliot comment on established authors. When, after the lecture, someone asked

* In the same Chamber-of-Commerce spirit, Brooks asks: "What was Proust's sickness if not an excuse for dropping out of the common life, to which he was not superior but unequal?" Cf. Eastman's *Reader's Digest* article on Marx: "While telling a planet how its future business was to be run, he threw up his hands at the comparatively simple task of earning his own living. He had to be supported throughout life like a baby, and as though to compensate he grew an enormous beard." Such judgments tell us nothing pertinent about Proust or Marx, but much about their critics and even more about the state of our culture today.

him whether Wagner and Dostoievsky were "primary", Brooks replied in all solemnity, according to the *N.Y. Times*, "that although Wagner had streaks of meanness in his character and Dostoievsky was morbid, their other qualities entitled them to be termed great men". Shades of Edmund Clarence Stedman! *

Everything is reversed in the looking-glass land Brooks mentally inhabits. He objects that Eliot and Joyce are destroying "tradition", but he himself would kill the living tradition of our age for the sake of a sapless respectability. He scolds the coterie writers for their "negativism" and "death-drive" but what could be more Nihilistic than his own rejection of the whole body of significant writing of our time? This apostle of the positive, the "life-drive", recommends to the contemporary American writer that he nourish his art on . . . Whittier. No, the shoe is decidedly on the other foot. It is true that the approach of the coterie writers to the specific historical values of modern society is negativistic, cynical, sceptical, destructive, etc. But in an age of social decay, it is only by rejecting the *specific* and *immediate* values of society that the writer can preserve those *general* and *eternal* human values with which Brooks is concerned. What blindness to see in *Ulysses*, a work overflowing with genial delight in the richness of human life, a *rejection* of life. What is rejected is a specific historical social order, and it is only by making that rejection that Joyce was able to survive as an artist and to preserve and defend those general human values on which culture depends. Brooks does not mention a single contemporary "primary" writer, because to do so would have given the whole show away. For there *are* such writers today, plenty of them. They put into practice what Brooks preaches, they accept modern society, they are positive, con-

* The Brooks of 1941, in fact, has joined hands with that vestal guardian of the bourgeois *convenances* he so acidly depicted in his *Ordeal of Mark Twain*: Olivia Clemens, who made her husband delete from his manuscripts such words as "stench", "offal", and "breech-clout". Brooks quotes one of her marginal notations: "P. 1038—I hate to have your father pictured as lashing a slave boy." "It's out, my father is whitewashed," noted Twain. He also took out the offending words, protesting, "You are steadily weakening the English tongue, Livy." Isn't all this just the operation Brooks would perform on modern writing?

structive, optimistic, popular, and they are firm believers in progress. Their work, however, turns out to be worthless as literature and also profoundly anti-human. It is printed in, among other periodicals, *The Saturday Evening Post*.*

Where have we heard all this before? Where have we seen these false dichotomies: "form" vs. "content", "pessimism" vs. "optimism", "intellect" vs. "life", "destructive" vs. "constructive", "esthete" vs. "humanity"? Where have we known this confusion of social and literary values, this terrible *hatred* of all that is most living in modern culture? Where have we observed these methods of smearing an opponent, these amalgams of disparate tendencies, this reduction of men's motives to vanity and pure love of evil? Not in the spirit of abuse but as a sober historical description, I say these are the specific cultural values of Stalinism and the specific methods of the Moscow Trials. Brooks' speech could have been delivered, and was in essence delivered many times, at Stalinist literary meetings here and in Russia during the crusade against "formalism" and for "social realism" which began with the Popular Front turn in 1936 and remains the characteristic Stalinist approach to aesthetics. Proust to him is a "spoiled child", Joyce "the ash-end of a burnt-out cigar", just as Radek could describe *Ulysses* as "a microscope focussed on a dunghill". And aren't we right at home in that poisonous atmosphere again when we read that John Crowe Ransom's literary criticism "suggests the joy of Bruno Mussolini hunting out the Ethiopians"? Or when Brooks retorts to Mann's "toleration" of T. S. Eliot: "Dr.

* In *Letters and Leadership* (1918), Brooks quotes these words of a popular writer of the day: "'Modern life is full of problems, complex and difficult. . . . The newspaper poets are forever preaching the sanest optimism. . . . That's the kind of poetry the people want, and the fact that they want it shows that their hearts and heads are all right.'" Brooks commented: "This doctrine is that the function of art is to turn aside the problems of life from the current of emotional experiences and create in its audience a condition of cheerfulness that is not organically derived from the experience but added from the outside." Brooks' evolution might be summed up thus: up to 1920 he urged American writers to be more critical of bourgeois society; in the twenties they followed his advice, found society rotten, said so; today, although (or perhaps because) society is incomparably more rotted, Brooks wants the verdict reversed.

Mann is not tolerant of Hitler, and there are certain people about whom I am not tolerant"? Is it far-fetched to bring in the Moscow Trials? Their stage-managers, like Brooks confronted with unanswerable historical objections to their frame-up, also had to seek motivations for the accused in personal vanity and sheer diabolism. And just as they found it convenient to amalgamate fascists, Bukharinists, Trotskyists, and bourgeoisie into a single block, so Brooks makes no distinction between the critical values of Eliot, Richards, Tate, Pound, and—actually—Logan Pearsall Smith. We are only just beginning to appreciate the terrible significance of the Trials for our age. The more closely integrated Stalin's Russia becomes into the Anglo-American war effort, the more threatening will be a recrudescence of its cultural values. We may have to fight the old fights of the thirties all over again. On the basis of this paper, Brooks is the logical successor to Dashiell Hammett as president of the League of American Writers.

But this outburst by an eminent American critic suggests even more than this. Here we have that *official* approach to culture which has spread far beyond the confines of the Stalinist movement. Brooks' thesis is essentially an amplification of the attack on the "irresponsibles" made a year ago by Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress and intimate of the White House. And would not Goebbels, the foe of "degenerate" modern art, applaud not only the particular cultural tendency attacked but also the very terms of the argument: "Primary literature somehow follows the biological grain; it favours what psychologists call the 'life-drive'; it is a force of regeneration that in some way conduces to race survival." "Kultur bolschewismus", "formalism", "coterie writing", "irresponsibles"—the terms differ for strategic reasons, but the content—and The Enemy—is the same.

The official approach to art has for its aim the protection of a historically reactionary form of society against the free inquiry and criticism of the intelligentsia. It is an attempt to impose on the writer *from outside* certain socio-political values, and to provide a rationalization for damning his work *aesthetically* if it fails to conform to these *social values*. The mechan-

ism is exposed with particular crudeness in Brooks' paper, which simultaneously damns coterie writing in social terms because it has a *bad* content ("pessimistic", "negativistic", etc.) and also damns it æsthetically because it has *no* content ("mere artificers of words . . . for whom only the manner exists and not the substance"). We may also note that the official critic, since he is attempting to defend what is historically indefensible, is forced at every turn to attribute petty and base motives to the serious writers of his day, and to elevate pure theological *wickedness* into a historical principle.

The recent growth of this tendency over here is an ominous sign of the drift toward totalitarianism. It is a matter of cultural life and death to resist this tendency, regardless of one's specific political beliefs. Looking over back issues of this magazine, I am struck with how continuously we have been fighting a rear-guard action against this growing official æsthetic, first as it manifested itself in the Stalinist writers' front, then, after the Nazi Pact disillusioned the main body of American writers with Stalinism (unfortunately, purely on the political level, without raising the broader cultural issues at all), as it has cropped up in the swing behind the government in the war crisis. The irony is, of course, that it *is* a rear-guard action, that the new social and political forces which alone can bring into being a new æsthetic tendency are still frozen and impotent. Eliot, Joyce, Proust, James, Valéry—these represent, as Brooks says, an end and not a beginning. Their school had done its work, fought and won its battles by the end of the twenties. But it is still the most advanced cultural tendency that exists, and in a reactionary period it has come to represent again relatively the same threat to official society as it did in the early decades of the century. The old battles must be fought again, the old lessons learned once more.

"'Well, in our country,' said Alice, still panting a little, 'you'd generally get to somewhere else—if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing.' 'A slow sort of country!' said the Red Queen. 'Now here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place.'"

AMATEUR JOURNALISM

ONE IS impressed and depressed by many things in London—the beauty of the parks; the dome of St. Paul's; the splendour of Hampton Court and the squalor of cheap restaurants; the comfort of the Underground, the taxis, the theatres; the discomfort of the climate, the money, the pubs. But one is at once impressed by, and continues to marvel at, the fact that there are seven weekly publications which are worth reading regularly; and not only worth reading (in the sense one feels one ought to) but interesting to read. These notes are mostly about *The Economist*, *The Listener*, *The New Statesman and Nation*, *The Observer*, *The Spectator*, *The Sunday Times*, and *The Times Literary Supplement*—plus two dailies on the same level, *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*. The dailies are less surprising to an American, since we have a number of comparable papers (except for their coverage of art, music, theatre, and books), such as the *Times* and *Herald Tribune* of New York, *The Washington Post*, *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*.

But there is nothing like these weeklies in America. In the thirties, *The Nation* and *The New Republic* were written for and read by "everybody" interested in ideas, politics, and art. But their bemusement by the Soviet myth isolated them from an increasingly large section of their readers and contributors—the Moscow Trials and similar issues split the American intelligentsia much more deeply than the British—and their clinging to the platitudes of liberal orthodoxy in the forties and fifties has not repaired the damage. They are now shrunk, drearily predictable, and of little interest to most American intellectuals. There are other comparable magazines, of course—*Harper's*, *The Atlantic*, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, to name the most widely read—but these are all more or less vitiated by the "middlebrow" approach, that is, they are edited with a wary eye on an amorphous public whose tastes and interests fluctuate somewhere between lowbrow and highbrow. This means at best

a compromise between quality and "what the readers will take" and at worst a genteel slickness that is more trying than the simple vulgarity of the lowbrow press.

The English weeklies are not exactly highbrow—their circulations are too large, their writing too relaxed, their spirit too clearly that of a confident and sizeable social group rather than of an embattled minority—but they are not in the least middle-brow, either. I think they may best be described as "amateur". The word has acquired a pejorative overtone, in this business-like, science-minded civilization. No one is insulted if he is called a professional or an expert, but nobody likes to be brushed off as an amateur, usually with "mere" in front. But the amateur is not necessarily inferior in skill to the professional; the difference between them is simply that the former does because he wants to what the latter does for pay.

In journalism, this means that the amateur is less vulnerable to the pressure of the market, and so to what I regard as the most corrupting influence on art and letters today, that of the cheap cultural goods sold in bulk to the mass public. The amateur may not know as much about any particular subject as the expert does, but what he does know (which may be rather impressive) he knows as part of his own life and of our culture in general, instead of in the narrow way the specialist knows it. Even those who fling "amateur" about as a term of abuse complain of the increasing tendency for knowledge to be subdivided into a myriad of special fields that are each worked intensively without much relation to the whole. The amateur, even the dilettante, would seem a necessary figure if our culture is not to dry up into academicism. The London weekly press is delightfully amateurish in spirit. (I am aware that, in literal fact, its editors and writers are paid, but the pay seems much less the central motive than is the case in America.) This, I think, is what gives it its special distinction.

GENTLEMEN V. PLAYERS! The brutal snobbery of this Victorian way of discriminating between athletes is, of course, intolerable, and it is hard today to imagine a society in which half

the players in a game would concede such an invidious distinction to the other half. But it did express something attractive about the British cult of the amateur: that certain activities should be pursued "for the sake of the game" only, not for profit and not even for success.* In writing, the cult of the amateur has much to recommend it. Americans write as professionals, either as scholars concerned with academic advancement (whence the barbarous jargon, the cramped, cautious specialisation of the academic quarterlies) or as professional journalists—and, more important, editors—concerned with attracting as wide and profitable an audience as possible (whence the hard, sleek superficiality of the non-academic press). But the book reviews, the drama and art criticism, and the articles in the London weeklies seem to me to be written with that pleasurable spontaneity, that recklessness (oddly combined, for an American, with a most impressive expertise) which comes when the writer is not trying to educate his readers or to overawe them or to appease them or to flatter them, but is treating them as equals, fellow-members of a clearly defined group of people who share certain common interests and certain common knowledge. Since he is not writing to impress his academic colleagues, he can write simply, informally, personally, sticking his neck as far out as he likes. Since he is not writing for a mixed audience whose lowest common denominator he must always keep in mind, he doesn't have to go in for elaborate explanations of the obvious, nor does he have to capture the reader's attention with a startling journalistic "lead" and try to keep it with debased rhetorical devices and constant appeals to the l.c.d.

Oddly enough, considering the informality of American manners, our writing is much stiffer than English writing, more artificial, removed to a greater distance from the reader, since an easy, personal style is risky with an amorphous audience. English reviewers speak in their own individual voices—the

* The old-style British athletes were appalled by the fact that competitors from upstart regions like Australia and America actually trained for an athletic contest, sometimes going so far as to make a study of technique; the shock was not lessened by the fact that the upstarts usually won.

headlong rush of Pritchett, the neat, balanced style of Connolly—and yet are clear and to the point, like good conversationalists. English critics actually criticize; they are much more severe on shoddy work than their American colleagues, who go in mostly for summarising the contents (even of novels) and showing they know where to pigeon-hole the work, and often forget to mention what they thought of it. Nor is it that American critics, though cautious, are more scholarly; on the contrary, the knowledge of his subject shown by the average English reviewer is far greater; reading the articles on art and music in the London *Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* after years of having to put up with the thin gruel provided in these departments by *The N.Y. Times* and *The N.Y. Herald Tribune* is like turning from *Reader's Digest* to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (that is, the old eleventh edition, before we Americans got hold of it).

THE amateur's interests, by definition, are wide-ranging since they include whatever he cares for (*amo*), and one can care for more aspects of life than one can know as an expert. When it is also considered that, as will be shown later, there are roughly only two publics in Britain—the classes and the masses—as against a great many in America, one can understand why American magazines are more specialised than their British equivalents.* Thus the American businessman reads *Barron's Weekly* and *The Wall Street Journal* for current business news, *Fortune* for longer-range stuff, *Time* for a systematic review of the news in general, and, if he is odd enough to be interested in books, some literary magazine for that. But the City man gets it all in *The Economist*, which also, unlike our business magazines, is read by many non-businessmen because it covers and comments on the week's events more thoroughly than any

* An exception is *Punch*, which prints only humorous material, in contrast to *The New Yorker*, which also, and indeed chiefly, prints fiction, poetry, and reportage. This seems to me a more workable formula: the funny-bone begins to ache when it is struck too consistently, the humorous note to become a little thin and forced; while *The New Yorker's* serious material is a relief from the cartoons and jokes (and, of course, vice versa).

other weekly does; its overseas news is remarkably full; and its book section is excellent—it had the best brief review I have seen of the Burrows book on the Dead Sea scrolls—and covers not only economic books but also biographies, literary criticism, philosophy, etc. The one-ness of the London reading public is shown not only by a business magazine's having so broad a range but also by the existence of weekly departments on business in *The Spectator* and *The New Statesman*; it is quite impossible to imagine such a thing in *The Nation* and *The New Republic*.

Similarly, in America the contact between scholars and non-scholars is slight; there are two worlds in literature, for instance, the academic, with its professional journals, and the lay, which reads *The Saturday Review*, the "little" magazines, and the Sunday book sections of *The Times* and *Herald Tribune*. But in England learning is not the province of specialists but the common possession of the whole educated class. So one gets that remarkable institution, *The Times Literary Supplement*, which every week publishes general articles and reviews of a quality and authority achieved in America only occasionally in some "little" magazine or academic quarterly, and also covers such specialised works as *Histoire de la Boîte à Musique et de la Musique Mécanique*, a Swiss work priced at £7 10s.

One special aspect of what might be called amateur expertise is the amount of highly-informed comment on events in other parts of the world that appears in the British press. Our own coverage is comparatively thin and the interpretation comparatively provincial, with the important exception of *The New York Times*. Reading the London weeklies, and the *Times* and *Guardian*, is to be constantly reminded that one is at the centre of what was until recently a world empire. It is taken for granted that readers know what, and where, the Trucial States are, what is the difference between an emir and an emu, and that what was Benares in Kipling's day is now called Banaras. These reports combine great knowingness with off-hand comments from an *echt*-British point of view, revealing that combination of insularity (as to evaluation) and cosmopolitanism (as to knowledge) which has long made the Englishman abroad a confusing figure to the *indigènes*:

The Protectorate states produce almost nothing, and often seem quite incorrigibly addicted to the pleasures of violence and deceit. The conscientious Englishman, having discovered Upper Aulaki on his map, may well go on to wonder why on earth a harassed British government wants to have anything to do with this disagreeable backwater.

This freedom with off-the-cuff value judgments is another characteristic of amateur journalism, and is not common practice in the American press, which has a sober, professional abhorrence of what it calls "editorializing". Our papers report the sessions of Congress, for example, in cold factual detail; interpretation is left to the editorial columns. But a British newspaper treats Parliamentary debates as if they were sporting events, noting who was in good form and "editorializing" all over the place with the jaunty expertize that in America is permitted only in a report on the latest *Giant v. Dodgers* game.

THE London mass-circulation newspapers come as something of a shock to an American, accustomed to the relatively high standards in typography, lay-out, and content of *The New York Daily News* (a remarkably competent, clever job, given the standards of mass journalism—which, of course, should not be given, or accepted), *The Chicago Tribune*, and even the Hearst papers. (*The Telegraph* is an exception; although its circulation is large, it is on a level comparable to *The Times* and the *Guardian*—and most American papers.) A glance at one of these "newspapers", with myriads of tiny trivial items swarming confusedly over the front page, with heads in a jumble of sizes and styles that recall an old-fashioned patent-medicine throwaway or the most amateurish efforts of one of our schools of journalism, with dingy blots of news-photos and ads and cartoons and maps and weather reports and Late News Bulletins all smothering each other like plants in a South American rain-forest (sometimes desperately fenced off with boxes), a glance at this welter of civilisation is enough to make one want to do a Lawrence, T. E. or D. H. A recent front page of *The Daily Express*

contained twenty-nine different items, including "Six New Admirals Named" (with tiny figures of six admirals under the head, to give it more punch); and a one-inch item, "LET THE QUEEN STAY WITH US", which revealed that a Canadian M.P. had "suggested" that the Queen should live in Canada "three to five months every four years".

A recent front page of *The News Chronicle*, which I gather is considered rather a highbrow paper of its kind, had twenty-five items in almost as many sizes and faces of type, while *The Evening News* hit the jack-pot with fifty different front-page stories including such enigmatic bulletins as "THEY STOLE SHIRTS. . . Shirts were stolen during the night from E. and K. Thomas, drapers, in Blyth-road, **West Kensington**. The thieves made two other break-in attempts in the same block." With the mass periodicals put out frankly for entertainment—the above papers are, in theory, engaged in giving the news—the comparison is the same. *Life* in every way—technically, æsthetically, and in the cultural level of its articles—is far above *Picture Post*; the score of disreputable scandal magazines that have arisen in America since the success of *Confidential* are much more sophisticated, in typography and content, than such British opposite-numbers as *Weekend Reville*; and there is nothing in America to compare with that malformed colossus of the British press, *The News of the World*.

The excellence of some of the press in London is connected, I think, with the degradation of the rest. The gap reflects, and in fact is only made possible by, the gulf between the classes.* In England there is hardly any middlebrow press. But in America, where class distinctions are fuzzier, highbrow culture competes with mass culture, merges into it in a subtle and bewildering and demoralising way. Except for the scholarly journals and a few "little" magazines like *Partisan Review*, there

* In America, one's accent "places" one as to—place. The Southern drawl, the Midwestern nasal tone, the clipped New England twang, the brisk, brutal New York delivery, all are social equals. But in England the "right" accent is one and indivisible. A most unsnobbish father confessed to me that he had to send his children to "good" schools, at no matter what scraping and scrimping economies, simply because he couldn't bear to hear them talking with the accent they would pick up in the free State schools.

is no distinctively highbrow, or serious, press and each periodical finds its place in the infinitely graduated spectrum between low-middlebrow and high-middlebrow.

LIBERAL intellectuals in England and in America are worried because the circulation of serious journals is in the tens of thousands while that of mass magazines is in the millions. While it would admittedly be cheering if the figures were reversed, I think this anxiety overdone for several reasons: (1) an audience of fifty or even five thousand is large enough for all practical purposes (that is, for the communication of art and ideas to a public large enough not to be monolithic and ingrown); (2) a smaller audience on a higher level will be more affected by what it reads than a larger audience on a lower level, partly because the material itself will be more significant, more able to "make a difference" to them, and partly because they will be intelligent enough to let it make more of a difference; (3) the smaller group will be in general more articulate, energetic, intelligent, and powerful (that is, with higher status and more important jobs) than the masses who drowse over *The News of the World* or the American tabloids, and so it will make more of a difference what they read. This line of thought is obnoxious to conventional liberals because it is "undemocratic" (they really mean inegalitarian, not the same thing at all, since, as the Nazis and Communists have demonstrated, levelling can produce a most undemocratic mass society), but it may nonetheless have some validity.

What seems to me alarming is not the contrast between the circulations of the highbrow and the lowbrow periodicals, but rather the influence of the latter on the former, the gravitational pull that is exerted by a large body (of money, or readers) on a much smaller one. This pull is greater in America than in England because of the blurring of class lines and consequently of cultural traditions—defining a tradition as a code held to not out of conviction (as a principle is held) but for the much deeper, more stubbornly resistant reason that it is simply the way one is. A journal like *The Times Literary Supplement*

seems to be edited and read by people who know who they are and what interests them. That the vast majority of their fellow-citizens do not share their interest in the development of English prose, the bibliography of Belorussia, André Gide's treatment of his wife, the precise relation of folksong and plainsong, and "the large blot" in a letter of Dr. Johnson's which has given much trouble to several of his editors, to cite some matters gone into quite thoroughly in the issue of September 14 last—this seems not in any way to trouble them. But the editors and readers of the *T.L.S.*'s opposite number in America, *The Saturday Review*, have no such clear notion of their cultural identities and interests. The editors feel the pressure of competition with *Time*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and the other great middlebrow commercial magazines—it is hard just to get on the news-stands, the commercial slicks being so much more numerous than is the case in England. Nor do their readers have a very clear idea of their cultural identity, lacking a tradition that will fence them off from the vigorously proliferating jungle of the mass media, so that a graduate student will drop *Collier's* to pick up *Kenyon Review* (or, more likely, the other way around). It is felt, also, that there is something snobbish, perhaps even un-American about ignoring the popular press, as indeed there is.

The effect of the gravitational pull of mass media on the high-brow press in America is illustrated by the evolution of *Harper's* and *The Atlantic*. In the 19th century these magazines were the organs of an élite,* printing Emerson, James, Henry Adams, Howells, and Lowell and maintaining a dignified level of taste and thought (if it was also rather stuffy, this was because it was a somewhat provincial élite). They both have now slicked themselves up to become the competitors of the commercial magazines. A modern Adams or James would not find sympathetic reception in these streamlined journals, nor in any other

* "Élite" and "tradition" are used here in a cultural as well as a social sense. The relation of the two meanings is complicated, since the social is by no means synonymous with the cultural aristocracy, but I think it can be said that class lines make it easier for a cultural élite to survive. Certainly the two countries where "mass culture" has most corrupted and stifled the real article are the two in which traditional class lines have been almost wholly wiped out, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.

American magazines of sizeable circulation—until he became famous, of course, as in the case of Hemingway and Faulkner.

If one wants to publish a serious article in America—that is, something one takes seriously as an expression of one's own special way of looking at things—there are three possibilities.

One is the academic quarterlies, which range from purely professional journals like *Psychiatry*, *The Review of Politics*, and *The Journal of the History of Ideas* to more general organs like *Yale Review*, *Virginia Quarterly*, and *Foreign Affairs*.

Another is the "little" magazines, which are subsidised by individuals (*Partisan*, *Hudson*) or organisations (as *Commentary*, which is published by the American Jewish Committee) or which come out of some campus (*Kenyon*, *Sewanee*, *Accent*, *Chicago*).*

The third is *The New Yorker*, which, although it is one of the most profitable of the commercial magazines, is edited with less worry about the reactions of its readers (more accurately, of a hypothetical reader who exists only in the editor's mind and who always seems to be less intelligent than any actual reader one meets) than are middlebrow magazines like *Harper's* or *The Reporter*. It therefore permits the writer to express himself without regard for the conventions of American journalism, taking the space he needs, using long sentences, interesting syntax, and difficult words, and going into all kinds of recondite by-ways simply because the subject seems to lead there. At least, such has been my experience. I think this is because *The New Yorker's* audience, though large—its circulation is around 300,000—is, like the audience of *The Economist* or *The Spectator*,

* Both these types flourish far more abundantly in America than in England, in curious contrast to the feebleness of our weekly press. (I can't think why this should be so.) The American thus has at least one advantage over the English writer—he has many more places in which to publish long, ambitious articles. The almost complete absence of such articles is the chief weakness of the London weeklies; 2,000 words is their usual top and, for some kinds of writers and themes, this is not enough room to turn around in. There is an exaggerated fear of being "heavy" or "boring", but some ideas, and writers, are "heavy" by nature, often the greatest—would Marx, Freud, or Kierkegaard have been able to make *The Spectator*, one wonders—and an unrelieved diet of short, graceful articles has its own kind of monotony. It seems odd that an important literary critic like F. R. Leavis, because he writes long, weighty articles, appears in *Commentary* but not in the British weeklies.

clearly defined as to tastes and interests. The definition was made by the late Harold Ross, who founded the magazine and edited it until his death a few years ago, and expresses a peculiar kind of snobbishness, neither intellectual nor social, in fact directed against both, and yet partaking of both. Within this plot of artificial grass, fenced off from American mass culture as the more natural English enclosure is fenced off, some freedom of expression is possible. There are serpents in this Eden: the magazine's own "formula" is often monotonous and over-restrictive, and the editorial pencils sometimes fly too busily. But the thoroughness with which *The New Yorker* violates the canons of professional middlebrow journalism is always inspiring. Timeliness is disregarded in a regal way: books are reviewed long after they have appeared; topical articles are held for months; comment rather than news is the aim. The make-up is wildly unprofessional: nothing is "featured", on the cover or inside; the contributions run on consecutively, with the authors' names at the end in small type; there isn't even a table of contents. *The New Yorker* is, in effect and in its editors' minds, a weekly letter to its readers, whose tastes are disregarded simply because they are assumed to be those of the editors and writers who compose the letter.

THE special quality of British literary journalism is related to the existence in London of a close-knit intellectual community. "What has astonished me, and what astonishes any American," Irving Kristol wrote in *Encounter* after he had been a while in London, "is the extent to which almost *all* British intellectuals are cousins. . . . In America it is otherwise, to put it mildly. . . . It is by no means impossible that the senior editors of *The New Yorker* should never have met the senior editors of *Time*." As an alumnus of both these magazines, I can testify this is accurate; intellectual circles in New York are neither concentric, interlocking, nor tangential, and one knows "personally" (the very expression suggests the American lack of contact) only a small proportion of the authors whose books and

articles one reads. The London intellectual community is much broader, including businessmen, lawyers, and even publishers, even Members of Parliament; most literary parties of any size produce an M.P. or two, but in New York one could write about politics for years without seeing a Congressman except in the newsreels.

Indeed, "community" is too mild; it is more like a family, a large, variegated family, serious-minded but with a strong sense of play. They know the family jokes (what is "Butskellism"?), the eccentric uncles (G.B.S.), the ancestors (several weeklies have recently discussed at length whether a 17th-century man of science named Robert Hooke was a nice man or not). They are very much concerned with preserving the old home and with the proper appreciation of its charms; John Betjeman and Geoffrey Grigson are in constant communication with their cousins on the matter. They love to play intellectual games together; each week *The Spectator* and *The New Statesman* set their readers a task and print the winning entries; these are often witty and ingenious; it appears that every Englishman is born with a silver pen in his mouth.

The two most striking examples of family journalism are *The Listener* and *The Times*. The former is, of course, notable because it consists entirely (except for an excellent book section) of material from radio programmes; a magazine on such a level as *The Listener*, and drawn only from this source, would in America have to appear not weekly but annually. *The Listener* is family talk around the tea-table. The elders reminisce; the learned uncles discuss Kant or Josephus, without either pedantry or condescension; the cousins in Parliament or on the press analyse current events; those with a taste for exploring or gardening or book-collecting talk about their hobbies; someone who has picked up some curious information on Scottish architecture or the migration of herring passes it along; there is talk about books and art and cooking.

As for *The Times*, it is the quintessence of family journalism, devoting its first page entirely to classified ads (the petty concerns of the individual take precedence over wars and revolutions), and presenting the news in a remarkably confusing and

illogical form simply because that is the way it has always been done and the members of the family know their way around in it as well as they know the way the furniture is placed in the living-room. Topicality is not a fetish; special articles may be on the Suez crisis or on the battle of Poitiers; the latter type I find the more interesting, and so, I suspect, do the readers. A topic has to have some "new peg" from which to hang, in the professional American press, but in England it is merely a question of whether it interests a reading public whose tastes the editors know intimately because they share them. The readers of *The Times*, as might be expected in this kind of journalism, supply much of the paper's interest. There is, of course, the famous letters column. Also typical is the custom of writing letters to *The Times* about distinguished friends who have recently died. These letters appear in the Obituary column and are not, as one might expect, the usual conventional pieties, but are thoughtful, moving, and full of interest even though they may end "He will leave an irreplaceable gap" or "Truly, as one of his biographers remarked, we shall never look upon his like again." The English knack for concrete detail and the English concern for truth come out even in this unlikely context.* This custom, unknown in America, where writing is a matter for the professionals (though, to adapt Clemenceau, it is really too important a matter to be left to writers), implies that the readers of *The Times*, as well as the friends who take the trouble to compose the letters, feel close enough to the dead to want to keep their memory alive a little. It is a family affair.

IN the thirties, the friendly personal relations between pro- and anti-Stalinists in London used to bewilder us New York radicals. Even anarchists, with us a wretched little sect looked

* Even on tombstones, for that matter. The tomb in Westminster Abbey of Sir Thomas Robinson, an 18th century Governor of Barbadoes, Tells All: "... tho he did several eminent services to the island, yet upon some Complaints sent home, he was recalled. Tho in justice to his Memory it should not be concealed that the Complaints were afterwards substantially acknowledged to be groundless."

on by all the Marxists groups—when they thought about such oddities—as contemptuously as if they were Holy Rollers or Seventh Day Adventists, even they seemed to have their accepted place in the English political zoo. Our tone was quite different; New York was more of a jungle than a zoo. To us it was inconceivable that the Communist lion could lie down, even for a tactical moment, with the Trotskyist political cat, or that issues like the Moscow Trials and the rôle of the Communists in the Spanish Civil War could be discussed in an amicable spirit. The Communists formally prohibited their people from “fraternizing with the class enemy”—a Party member who was detected talking with a Trotskyist in a Fourteenth Street cafeteria in anything but an exasperated shout was liable to expulsion. We Trotskyists had no such rule and in fact deplored such “bureaucratic monolithism”—we were, in a way, more in the English style—but words like “betrayal”, “frame-up”, “sell-out”, “counter-revolution”, and “GPU falsification” leaped to our tongues and pens. We regarded our English colleagues with a mixture of envy, contempt, and amusement. Either they were not serious, or we were too much so.*

Things don't seem to have changed much. One finds John Strachey and Clement Attlee writing in the neo-conservative *Spectator*, which on such issues as Cyprus and Suez criticizes the Tory government quite as freely as the liberal-progressive *New Statesman*. The continuing success of the latter, in contrast to the desiccated state of the *Nation* and *New Republic*, is due not

* I think, on the whole, it was they who were not serious enough. Not because the English spirit was not as sensitive as ours to the inhumanities and injustices of Stalinism (on the contrary, if anything), but because it seems to be hard for an English intellectual to take abstract ideas seriously. Unhappily much of the appeal of Stalin's (or Khrushchev's) Russia to the rest of the world, which doesn't share the British phlegm about abstract ideas, has been the philosophical-moral system created by Marx and the socialists and illegitimately usurped by the Soviet Communists. One thing one does miss in London is a keen interest in general ideas such as one finds in the Continental intellectual press and to some extent, though less than formerly, in our own. The recent exchange between V. S. Pritchett and Arthur Koestler in *The New Statesman* was interesting in this context—Pritchett just couldn't understand how Koestler could get so passionate and intolerant about political theories—as was the absurd overestimation, by some of the most acute London critics, of Colin Wilson's *The Outsider*.

to any greater perspicacity on the Stalinist issue but rather to the typically British way it has avoided going to extremes. Guided by the skilful journalistic touch of Kingsley Martin (a cool operator, very different from such an American counterpart as the impulsive Freda Kirchwey), it has trimmed its sails to the moderate winds of English political feeling. *The New Statesman* is read by "everybody"; its softheadedness on Russia is offset by strong and varied cultural departments and by Mr. Martin's catholic editing; it has never become as shrill and one-sided as its American counterparts.

This is not to say that *The New Statesman* isn't the sister-under-the-smooth-British-skin of its American poor relations. Like them, it suffers from the pernicious anæmia of modern liberalism, a point of view that combines the worst features of tradition (as, stereotyped reactions) and utopian rebellion (as, lack of realism, moral smugness). The term should really be liberalistic, implying a vulgarisation and distortion of the original article, as with "modern" *v.* "modernistic". "Liberal" is a proud adjective, historically (Herzen, Emerson, John Stuart Mill) and etymologically ("open to the reception of new ideas," says the Shorter Oxford Dictionary). But it has been devaluated in our time, confused with "progressive" (toward the MVD labour camps?) and "democratic" (the plebiscitary dictatorships? the mediocrity of "public opinion"?). Comparing *The New Statesman* with *The Spectator*, I find the latter both more interesting and more admirable. It is more interesting because its "line" is less predictable than *The New Statesman's*, its writers often reacting to the actual situation, which never quite fits into any preconceived ideas, instead of to formulæ by the Fabians out of Marx. It is more admirable because it faces up to events instead of evading them.* When

* Or, as in the case of the reportage by John Freeman on the satellite countries in the July 21st *Statesman*, distorting them to fit the formula. Under the interesting title, "A Profile of the People's Democracies"—interesting because "people's democracy" is the cant phrase devised by the Moscow Office of Public Relations (to translate freely) for certain political operations that sound better that way—Mr. Freeman wrote a kind of inter-office memo to the Communist gauleiters of Eastern Europe. He gave them full credit, and perhaps a bit more, for the post-Stalin "thaw" and advised

Nasser moved in on Suez, *The Spectator* thought this was a matter of some importance to England and devoted a forthright (and, it must be admitted, rather indignant) first-page editorial to the subject. *The New Statesman*, reacting in routine fashion as the professional friend of the colonial underdog, felt that the obvious first-page editorial for the issue after Suez was a denunciation of British misdeeds in the Seychelles Islands.

"A STRONG SMELL FROM THE SEYCHELLES" it boldly headlined. Suez was discreetly embalmed on page four in a turgid editorial which got around to mentioning the unpleasantness in its forty-first line, and then went on to blame it all on the U.S. State Department, "which has effectively provoked the crisis" by refusing to finance Colonel Nasser's dam. Similarly, the *Statesman* gave the Poznan uprising its page-four treatment, while *Spectator*, again reacting to actuality and unhampered by previous ideological commitments—the liberals have their own tradition by now, an ever-lengthening burden of mistakes, disasters, and betrayals that drags after them like Marley's iron chain of ledgers and cash-boxes—hailed the workers of Poznan on page one.

them, for prudential reasons, to liberalise their policies still more. One had the general impression that it was all an experiment in socialism, conducted in the spirit of the Webbs, and that if only outside critics would pipe down, the people of Eastern Europe could stride into the Dawn of a New Era arm in arm with their Fabian shepherds. Mr. Freeman was quite definite as to who are the saboteurs of progress—Radio Free Europe, the Voice of America, and "even some of the BBC programmes," plus the *émigrés*. In short, almost everybody outside the satellites who is concerned with their problems. His advice to the *émigrés* is blunt: Shut Up or Go Home. "All those who now choose to remain abroad should understand that, by doing so, they are losing any influence they may once have enjoyed among their compatriots. It is, after all, difficult for Poles or Czechs who have to sweat it out at home to feel respect for those who, from the shelter of a hostile country, promote activities which are at best aimed at sabotaging the system and which can easily lead to bloodshed and reprisals." One wonders what Herzen or Lenin, who promoted activities from the shelter of a hostile country aimed at sabotaging an earlier—and how much milder!—Russian despotism, would have said to such advice. Indeed, one knows. But of course they were opposed to the despots and were not taken in by cant about Holy Russia, the Czarist equivalent of People's Democracy.

As common law is the quintessence of British justice and boiled vegetable marrow that of British cooking, so the peculiar, and great, contribution of the English to journalism is the letter-to-the-editor. It fits into my thesis in several ways: it is strictly amateur, being produced free, gratis, and without cost; it is a cosy, family-circle kind of communication; and it affords full scope for the sort of informal writing at which the English excel. In each of the weeklies and dailies I am considering here the letters section is given a prominent place—usually the individual letters are listed in the table of contents—and I find myself turning to it first. Its contents are varied, exciting, amusing, instructive, or just simply odd.

There seems to be something especially congenial to the English temperament about the act of writing a letter-to-the-editor. The form has been developed to a high point through the generations, and is now capable of great flexibility, ranging from one-sentence grace notes ("Sir,—England needs quality, not equality. Yours faithfully. . . .") to such lengthy and complex fugues as the many-voiced discussion, lasting weeks in *The Spectator*, of the place of the Virgin Mary in Catholic theology. There are letters by everybody from Marie Stopes to Lord Astor about everything from the Suez crisis to the reason circus rings are 42 ft. in diameter. There are letters from politicians whose bills have been criticised ("Sir,—You have honoured me by commenting on the Bill I have introduced, so I hope you will afford me a little space. . . .") and from authors whose books have been criticised—who, being authors, employ a wide variety of styles from Ironic Elaborate ("Sir,—I have always admired the creative imagination of many of your book reviewers, but never more so than in Paul Johnson's review of my book, *Time and Place*, in your columns last week. . . .") to Bar-Room Blunt ("Sir,—How bitchy can a reviewer get?"). Letters from Indignant Readers: "Sir,—I do not understand why *The Spectator*, which is supposed to be an independent weekly, employs Mr. Charles Curran as its chief political commentator. He is about as independent of the Tory central office as a tortoise is of its shell." Letters from contributors who have been mis-

understood: "Sir,—May I say that when I described Professor Oakeshott's inaugural lecture as 'a wily defence of the shabby against the new' I meant by 'shabby' 'time-worn' and not, as one reader supposed, 'underhand'?" Letters from writers of previous letters who feel they have been maltreated by writers of previous letters: "Sir,—I am sorry that Lord Esher has introduced a personal and offensive note into a correspondence that has hitherto been conducted on the level of principle. . . ." And, finally, letters which, in prose as in provenance, epitomize the art-form, as the following contribution to a discussion in *The Times* on the decline of the walking-stick (Am.: cane):

Sir,—Have your correspondents forgotten the solemn judgment of a Chinese sage upon the English, that even the best of them take a stick with them when they go for a walk? "For what purpose except to beat the innocent?"

Yours, &c.,

GILBERT MURRAY.

Yatscombe, Boar's Hill, Oxford.

Encounter, 1956.

THE EISENSTEIN TRAGEDY

I

WAS IT ONLY a dozen years ago that, with pious excitement, we went to "little" movie houses—the very term has disappeared—to see the new films from Russia? Is it so short a time since many of us were writing on the cinema as *the* great modern art form, the machine art whose technique was most in harmony with the dynamism of the machine age, the art that most powerfully affected such peculiarly modern areas as Freud's subconscious and Pavlov's reflexes, the only art that could sometimes bridge the gap between serious creation and mass taste, so that *Birth of a Nation*, Chaplin's comedies, *Potemkin*, and a few other films might be said to have been the only works of our time that have been both popular and great? Our enthusiasm was not misplaced, our theories were not unfounded. And yet the wonderful possibilities that lay before the cinema ten years ago have withered into the slick banality of Hollywood and the crude banality of the post-1930 Soviet cinema. The potentialities, which really existed, which, for that matter, still exist and in even richer profusion, simply were not realized, and the cinema gave up its own idiom and technique to become once more what it was before Griffith: a mechanical device for recording stage plays. Like so much else in the last decade, it crept back into the womb, into unconsciousness. It has been many years now since, anywhere in the world, a film has been made which, æsthetically speaking, is cinema at all.

These depressing reflections are suggested by Eisenstein's new book, *The Film Sense*, which reads more like a conscientious and not too inspired Ph.D. thesis than like the work of the creator of *October* and *Potemkin*. The only valuable part of the book is the Appendices, which reprint some Eisenstein scenarios and articles and give a bibliography of his writings, films and unrealized projects.

I think *The Film Sense* may best be understood as an attempt

by its author to adopt the protective coloration of official Stalinist culture. This explains the platitudes: the distinguishing mark of "an emotionally exciting work" is that it causes "inner creative excitement in the spectator" (p. 35); "the technique of creation recreates a life process, conditioned only by those special circumstances required by art" (p. 43); repetition "may well perform two functions"—(1) "to facilitate the creation of an organic whole", (2) to develop "mounting intensity" (p. 95); etc. It also accounts for the citations from Walt Whitman, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Lewis Carroll, Pliny the Elder, and practically everybody else that strew the pages, apparently to show that Eisenstein has the authority of all past culture on his side. (Time was when that would have worried him!) And it also accounts for the ghastly "official" style in which the book seems to have been written—possibly Mr. Jay Leyda, the translator, is here partly responsible—so very different from the expressionist fireworks of Eisenstein's earlier writing. In fact, I would almost venture to say that Eisenstein has modelled his prose on Stalin's; there is the characteristic turgidity; the lingering over the obvious; even the familiar catechism form—isn't this a perfect echo: "What was the distortion in our attitude at that time to this indisputable phenomenon? The error lay . . . etc."

Above all, this hypothesis accounts for the remarkable change in Eisenstein's conception of montage. "There was a period in Soviet cinema," he begins his book, "when montage was proclaimed 'everything'. Now we are at the close of a period during which montage has been regarded as 'nothing'. Regarding montage as neither nothing nor everything, I consider it opportune at this juncture to recall that montage is just as indispensable a component of film production as any other element of film effectiveness." Thus montage, once the distinguishing principle of the Eisenstein school, has become simply one among many technical devices. Eisenstein has furthermore broadened his definition of montage until the term now merely describes any relation of elements in art. He has converted his old battle cry into a platitude. We are told that the "basic aim and function" of montage is "connected and

sequential exposition of the theme, the material, the plot, the action . . . the simple matter of telling a connected story.” This, he frankly remarks, is, of all aspects of montage, “the one really immune to challenge”—as indeed it is, since not even a Soviet commissar would deny the need for “a connected story”. This is a complete reversal of Eisenstein’s former theory. In his article, “The Cinematographic Principle and Japanese Culture”, in *Transition* for Spring-Summer, 1930, Eisenstein denounced the idea that montage is “a junction of elements” as “a most pernicious method of analysis”. He continued: “By what then is characterized montage . . .? By collision. . . . By conflict. By collision. . . . From the collision of two given factors arises a concept. Linkage is, in my interpretation, only a possible *special* case. . . . Thus, montage is conflict. The basis of every art is always conflict.”

Eisenstein gives no explanation for this reversal, in fact does not mention that a reversal has taken place. Soviet culture doesn’t build on the past, any more than Stalinist politics do. The Party line, in art as in politics, changes overnight into a flat contradiction of yesterday’s line, so that the present is related to the past only as good is to evil or black to white; the past is simply scrapped, buried, forgotten. Soviet artists have no tradition; they must wipe off the past, as one wipes off a blackboard, the day the line changes. They are unable to learn from the past, and their culture is shallow and undeveloped since it is constantly uprooted.

Eisenstein’s change of mind about montage has nothing to do with æsthetic theory; it is simply an adaptation to the political pressures which have crushed all Soviet art in the last decade, and whose impact on the cinema I described in a series of articles in *Partisan Review* several years ago. The outlawry of “formalism”, i.e. avant-garde experiment, in favour of “social realism” was partly an expression of the Philistine taste of the new-rich Stalinist bureaucracy, partly a move to harness art to the immediate services of mass propaganda (cf. Stalin’s famous directive to Soviet composers to produce tunes the people can whistle on their way to work). In the triumph of the “linkage” over the “conflict” concept of montage these factors are in-

volved—"linkage" is the Hollywood method, after all—and also another principle. The cinema is a dramatic art form, and dramatic structure depends largely on the tension created by conflict; but there cannot be conflict in a totalitarian state, since there is only one principle, one set of values authorized to be publicly expressed. I suggest, somewhat tentatively, that there is an intrinsically revolutionary quality to the conflict-montage of Eisenstein's *October* (1927), while the linkage-montage of *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), which robs it of any dramatic interest and makes it a static kind of masque or pageant, is in itself counter-revolutionary.

The grandeurs and the miseries of the modern artist find high expression in Eisenstein's career. In the decade following the October revolution, his three great films—*Potemkin*, *October*, and *Old and New*—were perhaps the supreme expression of the remarkable flowering of avant-garde art in the springtime of the new society. By 1929 the Stalinist bureaucracy had consolidated its hold on the State apparatus, and the great period of creativity in the arts was over. That year Eisenstein got permission to travel abroad. Whatever hopes he may have had of finding a more congenial milieu in the capitalist world—his difficulties with Stalin had begun as early as 1927, when he was forced to eliminate Trotsky's figure from all scenes of *October*—were frustrated with remarkable thoroughness. In Paris the police forbade the showing of *Old and New* to a private audience at the Sorbonne. He travelled on to Hollywood, where Paramount put him under a six-month contract with much publicity, and frustrated his attempts to make any movies. There followed the tragi-comedy of the Mexican film he made for a group of liberals headed by Upton Sinclair, which ended in Sinclair's asserting his property rights in the unedited film (which he later turned over to a Hollywood hack to chop into shorts) and Eisenstein returning empty-handed to Russia. The first indication many of us had as to what was going on in the Soviet cinema was the failure of Amkino to back up Eisenstein's efforts to get his Mexican film—said by many who saw the raw materials to be potentially his greatest achievement—out of the hands of Sinclair.

I am told that when Eisenstein returned to Russia he was a beaten man, disillusioned with both the capitalist and the new Stalinist world. There followed a long and heartbreaking series of unrealized projects: a cinematization of Marx's *Capital*, of the careers of Ivar Kreuger and Sir Basil Zaharoff; of Vandercook's *Black Majesty*, the Hart-Kaufman comedy, *Once in a Lifetime*, Malraux's *La Condition Humaine*; a comedy called *MMM*; a big historical film covering four centuries of Moscow's history; above all, the humiliating treatment of the only project that got beyond the scenario stage, his half-completed film on peasant life, *Bezhin Meadow*, which was branded "formalist" and officially suppressed in 1937. The only projects Eisenstein has been able to realize since *Old and New* (1929) are *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and the present book. Although in this book Eisenstein analyzes *Nevsky* as though it were a master-work, devoting many pages to the technical strategy of a tiny section, the film has always seemed to me empty and boring. It is a slow-paced historical pageant, devoid of any content other than a poster-like kind of patriotism, and quite conventional in its cinematic technique. I think it may be referred to the same strategy of cultural camouflage that produced the book: a patriotic pageant is about as "safe" an art work as it is possible to create in Russia these days. Eisenstein's next film is also to be a historical one, based on Ivan the Terrible. It is immensely significant that the one project Eisenstein was able to complete in the last decade is *Nevsky*, while all the rest, dealing with themes in which there is contemporary life, came to nothing, Back to the womb.

Eisenstein's career has been a tragedy without a hero. He has foresworn his most cherished æsthetic theories when they met with official disfavour; viz., his abject behaviour when his "formalist" heresy was attacked at the 1935 Film Conference (*Partisan Review*, August–September, 1938, pp. 42–5); his confessional article, "The Mistakes of *Bezhin Meadow*" (*International Literature*, No. 8, 1937); his use of big-name "stars" in *Nevsky*, and his acceptance as collaborators in that film of D. Vassilev, the leading "social realist" director, and Teleshiva of the Moscow Art Theatre. (In the twenties he wouldn't have wiped his

feet on the Moscow Art Theatre.) He has also issued from time to time the kind of political statements required of Stalinist intellectuals, and with a grossness bordering on the cynical. Examples are "My Subject is Patriotism" (*International Literature*, No. 2, 1939) and the preface to the present volume, in which he envisions "the definitive rise of an art of the cinema" as a result of Anglo-Soviet-American victory in the present war, and in which he writes: "I have long been tied to America both by a deep love and by the great tradition of film-art. Now these feelings are heightened by the warm friendship in which our people are together delivering powerful blows to the scourge of darkness, blood and savagery, in the fight for the ideals of mankind, culture, humanity and light." * So excessive, indeed, has been Eisenstein's capitulation to the demands of the Stalinist bureaucracy that a friend of mine thinks he is satirizing Stalinist culture by wholly conforming to it. He cites the case of Ernst Jünger, who several years ago satirized the Nazi blood-and-race ideology by publishing, in Germany, a work carrying it to extreme conclusions. This theory is psychologically possible, from what I know of Eisenstein's personality. Two considerations, however, seem to make it unlikely: (1) Eisenstein's failure to produce anything of interest in the last decade (which argues that he made a sincere, opportunist effort to conform); (2) the fact that this mode of behaviour, fantastic to our eyes, is the norm in the Soviet Union today, as was shown in the Moscow trials and in the æsthetic capitulations of artists like Pudovkin and Shostakovich.

There is a modern sentimentality about the artist and intellectual which pictures him as a Prometheus defying the gods of totalitarianism in the name of Art and Culture. Such defiances are not unknown, but they are generally delivered from a safe distance—California is an ideal location. When, as in Russia,

* "MOSCOW, February, 18 (UP): Sergei Eisenstein, one of the most prominent Soviet film directors, today launched a Soviet-German cultural co-operation programme over the Comintern Radio Station. Broadcasting especially to Germany, Mr. Eisenstein said that friendly Russian-German relations established last year formed a solid base 'for increased cultural co-operation between the two great peoples.'"—N.Y. *Times*, February 19, 1940.

the artist-intellectual has remained within the totalitarian borders, he has reacted pretty much as Eisenstein has, submitting in æsthetic as well as political matters. About the only heroes in the tragedy of Stalinist culture were Mayakovsky and Yessenin, who instinctively chose suicide to creative death. The Nazi order is by now old and extensive enough for some further evidence to begin to appear. Braque has accepted a high artistic post in occupied France, and Vlaminck, de Segonzac, and Derain are reported to have toured Germany on a "cultural mission". In an interview in the N.Y. *Herald-Tribune* of August 16, Dr. John Altmann revealed that the greatest of German film directors, G. W. Pabst, famous for the anti-war films, *Westfront*, 1918, and *Kameradschaft*, and for his wonderful cinematization of Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*, edited the Nazi documentary terror film, *Victory in the West*. According to *Pic* for August 18, Pabst was secretly working for Abetz while he was in Paris before the war, ostensibly an artist-refugee from Nazism. Such reversals cannot but shock us, just as a book like *The Film Sense* is shocking coming from Eisenstein. But I think we had better get used to such shocks; there are probably more unheroic tragedies to come.

Partisan Review, November-December, 1942

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There seems to be a natural hostility, incompatible with the best will on both sides, between modern totalitarianism and artistic creation. Capitalism perverts art or makes its practice more difficult, but totalitarianism simply liquidates it. In a predominantly private-capitalist society like our own, there are crannies in which the artist and intellectual can survive, as well as conflicting forces of which he can take advantage. Frick, the steelmaster, used to sit on a Renaissance throne underneath a Rembrandt reading the *Saturday Evening Post*, but the middle-class intellectuals, for all their economic impotence vis-a-vis Frick, were able to provide an audience for Joyce and James and Proust and Eliot. The "contradictions of capitalism", that bourgeois anarchy at which generations of Marxists railed, now turn out in our present ghastly period to have their advantages.

For in the kind of society that has developed in Russia, there are no crannies, no contradictions, no conflicting forces—at least none of a growth sturdy enough to give shelter to the artist. There is only one culture, one conception of art, one criterion of taste and achievement; and if, as seems to be fatally the case, the one standard is that of Frick reading the *Satevepost* (without the Rembrandt), then the most dignified way out for the artist is Mayakovsky's.

The news comes, for example, that Eisenstein is again in trouble with the authorities—Part II of his new trilogy, *Ivan the Terrible*, has been found to be ideologically defective and will not be released. Although since 1929 Eisenstein has made every possible effort to adapt his genius to the base and vulgar uses required of it—and a few efforts one might think not possible, such as presenting the half-crazy, murderous Czar Ivan as a progressive Leader of the People—he has been in almost continual difficulties; in the last seventeen years he has completed only two films, both of them much inferior to the three he produced in the five years before 1929. Most of the other talented Soviet artists have also tried faithfully to follow “party directives”, but have been little more successful than Eisenstein in avoiding constant harassment. One difficulty, perhaps the chief, is simply that they *are* men of talent—conscious, perceptive individuals who are mentally alive, who cannot help thinking freely, experimenting, seeing things in an original way, and so, despite their earnest wish not to, cannot help threatening Stalin's leaden dictatorship of mediocrity and lifeless conformism. One thinks of the writer in Henry James' *The Next Time*, who all his life tried to write something commonplace, cheap, vulgar that would sell but who kept producing one uncommercial masterpiece after another. Or of the remark of the Prince—another leaden despot—in Stendhal's *Charterhouse of Parma*: “It seems that this is a man of intelligence who comes to us from Naples, and I do not like that tribe. An intelligent man follows in vain the best precepts, even in good faith; always in some way he is cousin to Voltaire and Rousseau.”

Another difficulty is that serious artists, especially in a still primitive country like Russia, naturally are influenced by the

ideas and techniques of more advanced countries. There is a spontaneous internationalism about good art. The current campaign against "alien" Western influences is the most extreme but by no means the first. As I noted in 1939:

"It was precisely this international character of the Eisenstein cinema that most alarmed the Kremlin. If the masses are to accept the present totalitarian dictatorship as a fully realized socialist society, they must be cut off from contact with more advanced cultures. And so, in the last ten years, the Soviet Union has been slowly isolated. . . . This campaign is designed to reinforce, not to combat, those characteristic defects of backward cultures: provincial smugness, the ignorant acceptance of inferior, banal art forms as 'healthy' and 'normal,' and a corresponding suspicion of more advanced forms. This is what, æsthetically, the theory of 'Socialism In One Country', has meant."

There is an added motive today: to prepare for war against the West. In the "collective security" period and after Germany had attacked her in 1941, Russia looked on the Western powers as allies, potential and then actual. Her cultural policy, therefore, could not reach the degree of hermetism it is now attaining. Eisenstein made *Nevsky* in 1938 and *Ivan* was projected and largely finished during the war period. For all their faults, they are sophisticated films, and extremely "formalistic" in the stylization of costumes, acting and setting, and in the elaborate composition of each individual shot. They are not at all the sort of home-grown provincial films—a blend of stodgy realism and naïve melodrama—we generally get from Russia these days. When *Culture and Life*, therefore, criticize *Ivan the Terrible* for its "failure to portray contemporary reality" and its "cold and passionless historicism" and calls for fewer films about literary and historical figures and more about "the simple Soviet people who are the real creators of history", one can assume that even a Soviet editor would not criticize a historical film for not dealing with contemporary life, and that what is meant is that the stylized, ornate technique is now considered "formalistic", "decadent", and "Western". It is also just

possible that Eisenstein took advantage of the historical pageant to escape from that Contemporary Reality which both Russian artists and audiences seem to wish to forget. This suggests in turn another speculation: why is it that the dominant classes in America feed the masses dreams, romance, "escape" culture while their peers in Russia adopt just the opposite policy, although both have the same end in view?

October, 1946

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"It exhibited ignorance of historical facts by portraying the progressive army of the *Oprichniki* [Ivan's equivalent of the OGPU] as a band of degenerates, similar to the American Ku Klux Klan, and Ivan, a man of strong will and character, as weak and spineless like Hamlet." Thus the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union explained its suppression of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible, Part II*, in the course of its Decree of September 4, 1946, which gave marching orders to the cinema. This was part of the great "culture purge" that began in 1946 and whose rationale received its supreme expression in the famous 10,000-word speech that August by Andrei Zhdanov, who up to his death in 1948 was second only to Stalin in the Soviet hierarchy. Declaring war on all contemporary non-Soviet culture as decadent, corrupt, anti-human, reptilian, cannibalistic and generally not quite the thing, Zhdanov demanded that "our comrades, both as leaders in literary affairs and as writers, be guided by the vital force of the Soviet order—its politics". The Central Committee responded with decrees that, in addition to the one on the cinema, criticized current practice and laid down detailed "directives" for reform in literature (August 14, 1946), in the theatre (August 26, 1946) and in music (February 10, 1948). The Central Committee also, in its decree of August 4, 1948, officially repealed the Mendelian Law in genetics in favour of a new theory, by a home-grown biologist named Lysenko, which held that acquired characteristics can be inherited.*

* For the text of these decrees, of Zhdanov's speech and for much other fascinating and invaluable material on post-1945 Soviet culture, see *The Country of the Blind* by George F. Counts and Nucia Lodge (Houghton

The Central Committee's suppression of the second part of his *Ivan* trilogy must have been all the more upsetting to Eisenstein because up to then he seemed to have, at last, squared the circle and come to terms with the Soviet bureaucracy. After the premiere, in 1938, of *Alexander Nevsky*, Stalin himself is said to have clapped him on the back and declared, "Sergei Mikhailovitch, you're a good Bolshevik after all!" * And the following year, one Vsevolod Vishnevsky signalized Eisenstein's return to official favour with a biographical pamphlet which blamed his ten-year eclipse on certain unnamed "enemies and saboteurs" (as, for example, Boris Shumiatsky, installed by the Kremlin in 1930 as top boss of the cinema and given a free hand up to 1938 in reducing Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko and the other great directors of the twenties to Hollywood-type hacks) who "prevented the realization of various projects and suggested to Eisenstein ideas which were invalid, confused his goals and offered useless material" until finally "the party and the government, and Stalin in particular, came to his aid". It would be gilding an already refulgent lily to comment on this Tartuffian document, which continues: "We can only imagine what Eisenstein and other great artists could have created if not hampered by these obstacles."

Mifflin, 1949). The effect of these "marching orders" from the political bureaucracy to those actually engaged in artistic and scientific work was, of course, not motion but paralysis. In 1947, for example, just six feature films—full length, non-documentaries—were released in the USSR, and the average per year in the five-year period 1948–52 was exactly ten. The surrealist nature of these statistics may be appreciated if one compares the nine movies made in the USSR in 1951 with that year's production not only in the USA (432) but also in Japan (215), Mexico (102) and Egypt (96). Nor, on the basis of what one has seen of recent Soviet films, is there any reason to suppose that the USSR has gone in for quality instead of quantity.

* So Marie Seton reports in her biography of Eisenstein (Wyn, 1952), a peculiar volume whose rich documentation on Eisenstein's career, feelings and ideas conflicts constantly with her political line, which is favourable to the Stalin regime. Her data clash with her interpretation perhaps because of her close identification with her subject, and friend, who also, at least in public, always converted the thistles of political interference into the figs of socialist idealism.

Eisenstein's response to the Central Committee's rejection of *Ivan, II* was a confession of error that was a macabre echo of his apology, ten years earlier, when *Bezhin Meadow* was suppressed:

I must admit that we artists . . . forgot for a time those great ideals which our art is summoned to serve . . . the honourable, militant and educational task . . . to build a communist society. . . . In the light of the resolutions of the Central Committee, all workers in art must . . . fully subordinate our creative work to the interest of the education of the Soviet people. From this aim we must take not one step aside nor deviate a single iota. We must master the Lenin-Stalin method of perceiving reality and history so completely and profoundly that we shall be able to overcome all remnants and survivals of former ideas which, though long banished from consciousness, strive stubbornly and cunningly to steal into our works whenever our creative vigilance relaxes for a single moment. This is a guarantee that our cinematography will be able to surmount all the ideological and artistic failures . . . and will again begin to create pictures of high quality, worthy of the Stalinist epoch.

Is all this perhaps irony? Did Eisenstein, by carrying the Stalin-Zhdanov line to its logical extreme, thus attempt to express his personal despair and cry a warning to the outside world? Was there perhaps some justice, from the Soviet point of view, in the Central Committee's reaction to *Ivan, II*? (Even *Ivan, I*, which was not banned, is full of a sinister, neurotic atmosphere quite discordant with the surface political "line".) What can Eisenstein mean by those "former ideas" which, though sternly repressed, "cunningly steal into our works whenever our creative vigilance relaxes for a single moment"? What can they be but the artist's vision and energy which, whenever he is off guard, persist in shattering the crude, wooden formulæ of "socialist realism" with effects that are subtle, original, living, hence unpredictable and hence politically anathema in a totalitarian state? Or, alternatively,

was Eisenstein so neurotically dependent on identification with Soviet power that he never allowed its actual evil to come to consciousness, even when he was himself the victim? Eisenstein died in 1948, long before the post-Stalin "thaw" in Soviet culture. One can only speculate.

Problems of Communism, January-February, 1955

ALIEN CORN

LIKE *War and Peace*, Mikhail Soloviev's *When the Gods Are Silent*, is long and full of Russian history; unlike *War and Peace* it is tripe. In this last fact lies its significance. Exposing the evils of Stalin's Russia, which was a handicraft in the thirties, has now become a mass industry. *When the Gods are Silent* is what the Germans call *kitsch* and we call corn—a literary commodity manufactured for the mass market. Soloviev, who was an *Izvestia* correspondent up to his capture by the Germans during the war and who now lives in this country, has taken the same theme—the corruption of the Bolshevik revolution by Stalinism—which was treated with artistic seriousness and integrity by Arthur Koestler (*Darkness at Noon*), Victor Serge (*The Case of Comrade Tulayev*), and Godfrey Blunden (*A Room on the Route*), among others, and has exploited it to make a best-seller, or at least what his publishers hope will be a best-seller. (They have publicly threatened to make it "the No. 1 novel" of 1953.) Such an enterprise is a sign of the times; it will be interesting to see if it succeeds.

No one can complain about Mr. Soloviev's coverage of his theme, quantitatively at least. He takes his hero from the 1905 revolution through World War II. Like Upton Sinclair's Lanny Budd, Mark Surov skims through the historical tempest like a stormy petrel, always in the centre of great events, beloved of all, including women, and somehow combining a high moral tone with the ability to function for twenty years as a member of the corrupt and brutal Soviet officialdom. Leaking sawdust at every pore, he appears, successively and conveniently, as a Red partisan fighter in the Civil War, a student at Moscow University, a party official in the Far East, a member of the Kremlin staff, a major in the Red Army in the war, a prisoner of the Germans, and finally a guerrilla leader fighting both Hitler and Stalin. The publishers believe the result is "a great imaginative recreation of the mightiest upheaval

of our time", and if blood, sweat, and tears, plus plenty of Getting Around, could turn the trick, turned it would surely be. Unhappily, something more is needed.

After I had read ten pages of Mr. Soloviev's prose, I began to suspect he lacks talent. But as I read on, a deeper truth glimmered: he is without doubt untalented, but the special kind of badness of his novel is not due to that. No merely unskilled writer could so consistently strike the banal note. He would sometimes, however ineptly, put in something which he himself had thought, or felt, or observed; he would occasionally deviate into reality. But *When the Gods Are Silent* runs along the well-worn grooves of stock melodrama from beginning to end. Literally, "Steppe, immeasurable steppe," it begins, and it closes with Mark climbing a hill to "brood over the vast expanse of plain". ("What are you looking for?" Korovin finally asked. 'I am looking for a sunrise. I have faith that God will bring forth another sunrise in the East.' " *Cut, slow dissolve, The End.*) In between these termini, the steppe—vast, immeasurable, endless, in a word, Big—periodically reappears, to be well brooded over by one or another character. As I read the text, the author intends to suggest by this image that Russia is large in a cosmic sort of way, that the soil is eternal, and that, Stalin or no Stalin, Old Man Steppe jest keeps rollin' along. The other *dramatis personæ*, animate and inanimate, are equally predictable. Bullets sing, refugees swarm, faces are fixed like masks, mouths are twisted in bitter smiles, while other smiles play over other faces that are often weatherbeaten. The eyes are especially expressive—in fact, often they alone give a clue as to what the dialogue is supposed to express. They glitter feverishly, glow warmly, burn (or, in extreme cases, blaze) with hatred, light up with amusement, become narrow, steely, hard, etc. "'So our inevitable meeting has taken place, Major Surov,' the Gestapo man said, and a smile played on his lips." ("So we meet again, Lionel Strongheart!") On page 397 another villainous German actually purrs, and there is a Japanese villain who is polite, smiling, and hard to make out, in fact, inscrutable. These would have been fat parts for Von Stroheim and Sessue Hayakawa thirty years ago, but will be

hard to fill today, that sort of acting not being practised much any more. But in general, little will need to be changed to make it all into a super-colossal Grade B movie. Certainly not the chapter endings: "Tears burned in Mark's eyes, and he went to the open window. 'Look, Simon! Outside that window is Moscow [*the characters are forever taking each other to windows and pointing out obvious things*] and beyond Moscow lies all our country, flooded with the blood of our fathers, washed with the tears of our mothers. It's worth living, for her sake, Simon.' Outside, dawn was breaking." (*Lots of dawn-breakage, too*) Or this: "Then he smiled more broadly, to the corners of his eyes. [*Close-up*] He would live, he knew it. And someday he would go to Maria." (*Cut!*) Or this: "Yes, Mother; we'll go away. We'll go home . . . to the steppe!" (*Camera pans to long shot of Old Man Steppe.*)

If the artist's task is to induce a willing suspension of disbelief, Mr. Soloviev is no artist. My doubt was unsuspended through all 506 pages. I doubt that a starving man, offered a piece of bread, would remember to remark, "Stalin took everything away." I doubt that a man alone in the wild Siberian *taiga*, under whatever stress of emotion, would clutch his head and cry out, "I can't! I mustn't!" And among the mutters I doubt ever got muttered is: "You cur! You'll pay dearly for this!" I also doubt that the life story of any human being could so consistently and unremittingly illustrate a thesis as Mark Surov's does. The long arm of coincidence has a boarding-house reach in this novel. Even in the depths of the *taiga*, Mark can't help finding a notebook thoughtfully left behind by a Soviet engineer which gives a full account of a forced-labour camp. The poor fellow gets no rest at all. On page 213 he recognizes an elderly prisoner as none other than Borodin and at once has an edifying discussion with him on political ethics; a couple of pages later on, he runs into an old girl friend from Moscow U., also now a prisoner, with more edification and more mutual rumination on the evils of Stalinism; and so it goes, all work and no play, and Mark becomes a very dull boy indeed. The author works hard, too, conscientiously giving the public its \$3.95 worth of Intimate Glimpses

of History. "Have you heard that Vishinsky's being assigned to the University?" a Trotskyist classmate of Mark's asks. "He'll be a tower of strength to us." Two pages later, Mark runs into Stalin and we get a peep into Stalin's domestic life. ("How's it going, Nadia?" he asked in his guttural tones. 'Quite well, Joseph Vissarionovich,' she replied.") When some of Mark's friends are about to escape into Manchuria, they ask him to come along. He refuses: "My place is here, on this soil. . . . Life is driving us in different directions, but you are my friends." "Come with us," implores Lena, his old flame at Moscow U. "I've always loved you, Mark." "No, my place is here," he repeats, with a bitter smile. His real reason for not leaving with them, of course, is that it is only page 248 and he still has to get a job in the Kremlin so we can have some Intimate Glimpses of the 1937-38 purges.

The curious, and disturbing, thing about a book like this is that it precisely reverses the function of art: instead of making something imaginary seem real, it makes the real seem imaginary. Mr. Soloviev obviously hates what Stalin's regime has done to Russia, and he has good reason to hate it. His intention was to demonstrate fictionally the horrors of Soviet Communism; instead, by conveying them in the terms of journalistic cliché and of wooden melodrama, he has assimilated them to something we know is false and so has actually made it harder to believe in their reality. Only a master of *kitsch* could take the whole sweep of the Bolshevik revolution, the agony of the Russian people under twenty-five years of a brutal totalitarianism, and two world wars and make it all as flat, contrived, and implausible as *Forever Amber*. Such a master is Mr. Soloviev, so great a one indeed that he has surmounted even the fact that his book is written largely out of his own first-hand experience—at least, I am told that he, like Mark Surov, fought in the Civil War, studied at Moscow University, spent years in the Soviet Far East, was first a Kremlin reporter and then a war correspondent of *Izvestia*, was captured by the Germans, and took part in the resistance behind the lines. It takes a bit of doing to transmute a real-life experience like that into *kitsch*.

But, master of corn though Mr. Soloviev is, there is one factor

which may, providentially, prevent his book from having the popular success his publishers hope for—the fact that he learned his trade in Soviet Russia. His book is corny enough, but it is Soviet corn, alien corn. As the citations already given show, it is a cruder, more old-fashioned kind than ours. He has put in a few religious touches for the American market (“‘A great sorrow has brought you here,’ the priest murmured.”) but he has fallen down badly on sex, Soviet corn being puritanical. Not only are there pitifully few sexual interludes but also such as there are are miserably scamped. “She laughed happily and clung to him with her whole body.” No, this won’t do at all, our public expects much more. Above all, he has not realized that Soviet corn is heavily didactic while the American kind is strictly for entertainment. What kind of a way is this to begin a chapter: “Who would maintain that there is any limit to the power of the human heart? If that were true, Mark Surov’s heart would have broken that night when Yoshima presented him with Katya’s brooch. But the human heart has an unlimited potential.” Sounds like ore reserves. Working in the Soviet tradition, the author shapes his material to make a political point and reduces his characters to wooden puppets acting out a morality play, while American *kitsch* is rarely tendentious, treats its characters as individuals (however falsely observed), and tries to get at least a surface impression of variety and liveliness. In brief, the American mass audience wants to be amused by its corn, the Soviet masses, whether they want it or not, are instructed by their *kitsch*. Perhaps *When the Gods Are Silent* will not, after all, be “the No. 1 novel of 1953”.*

* It wasn’t. (1956.)

POLITICAL PATHOLOGY

ON THE PROLETARIAT AS A REVOLUTIONARY CLASS

THE VALIDITY of Marxism as a political doctrine stands or falls on its assertion that the proletariat is the historical force which will bring about socialism. The reason political Marxism today is of little interest, save to a few romantic or pedantic sectarians (and of course to the Communists, but in a form so debased and distorted as to bear about the same relation to Marx's teachings as the "Christianity" of the Catholic Church in Franco's Spain bears to the teachings of Christ), the reason is that the proletariat has not been the motive force in either of the two great revolutions of our century, the Bolshevik and the Nazi, but has been as much the passive victim or, at best, accomplice of the organized élites which have made those revolutions, as the bourgeoisie themselves.

The Marxist idea was that just as the bourgeoisie developed inside the feudal system for centuries and finally became strong enough to replace it with capitalism, so the workers are developing their power within capitalism and will finally "burst asunder" the bourgeois integument. Writing a half-century ago, in his crabbed, doctrinaire, original, and prophetic *Two Pages from Roman History*, Daniel De Leon put his finger on the peculiar weakness of the proletariat: "The working class, the subject class upon whom depends the overthrow of capitalism and the raising of socialism, differs from all previous subject classes called upon by History to throw down an old and set up a new social system." The difference is that other classes *first* gained "the material means essential to its own economic system" and *then* made their revolution. But the proletariat, by definition, is propertyless.

Holding the economic power, capital, on which the feudal lords had become dependent, the bourgeois was safe under fire. . . . Differently with the proletariat. It is a force every

atom of which has a stomach to fill, with wives and children with stomachs to fill, and, withal, precarious ability to attend to such needs. Cato the Elder said in his usual blunt way: "The belly has no ears". At times this circumstance may be a force, but it is only a fitful force. Poverty breeds lack of self-reliance. Material insecurity suggests temporary devices. Sops and lures become captivating baits. And the one and the other are in the power of the present ruling class to manœuvre with.

If the American working class were ever going to make a revolution, it would have done so, or at least tried to do so, during the 1929-33 depression. Instead, it voted in Roosevelt, who proceeded to captivate it with "sops and lures" of reform. One of the most tragi-comic documents in our social history is the pamphlet, *Culture and the Crisis*, which the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford put out in the fall of 1932. It was signed by an extraordinarily wide range of intellectuals, among them Sherwood Anderson, Newton Arvin, Erskine Caldwell, Lewis Corey, Malcolm Cowley, John Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser, Waldo Frank, Granville Hicks, Sidney Hook, Sidney Howard, Alfred Kreymborg, James Rorty, Frederick L. Schuman, Lincoln Steffens, and Edmund Wilson. "As responsible intellectual workers," they proclaimed, "we have aligned ourselves with the frankly revolutionary Communist Party, the party of the workers." They rejected Roosevelt because his election would result in nothing more than "changes here and there in the machine of government"; they rejected Norman Thomas because the Socialists "do not believe in the overthrow of capitalism" and hence "are the third party of capitalism". Nothing less than the real thing would satisfy these incipient Robespierres, nothing less than "the revolutionary struggle against capitalism under the leadership of the Communist Party", which is alleged to stand for "a socialism of deeds not words". But when these deeds are named, the heady wine of revolution turns into very small beer indeed. "There is only one issue in the present election—call it hard times, unemployment, the farm problem, the world crisis

or simply hunger." This issue is to be met by the Communist Party's programme of "immediate demands", viz: (1) State-financed unemployment and social insurance; (2) no more wage-cuts; (3) emergency farm relief and a debt and mortgage moratorium for farmers; (4) equal rights for Negroes; (5) defence of workers' rights against capitalist terror; (6) "a united front against imperialist war; for the defence of the Chinese people and the Soviet Union". Except for (4), on which little progress was made until the Truman Administration, Roosevelt's New Deal put into effect this entire programme (if his recognition of the Soviet Union and his "collective security" crusade against Nazi Germany may be taken as implementing the rather vague sixth point) as well as adding several dozen other similar measures such as TVA, the SEC and the Federal housing programme. What price revolution?

Or compare the aftermath of the Great French Revolution and the 1917 Russian Revolution. Both degenerated from their initial promise of democracy and liberation into the one-man dictatorships of Napoleon and Stalin. This political regression, however, did not mean that the old ruling class regained its economic power. Napoleon did not restore their estates to the nobles, but on the contrary laid the legal and governmental foundations for 19th-century French capitalism. Stalin did not call in foreign capital or restore private property and the capitalist market, as Trotsky expected him to do, but on the contrary pushed Trotsky's own policy of state-owned industrialization ahead at a brutally fast tempo. There is, however, one significant difference: Napoleon did not turn against those in whose name the 1789 revolution had been made, the bourgeoisie, but rather acted as their representative. But Stalin smashed the working class and reduced them to subjection. Napoleon and his generals and officials ruled without disturbing the economic power of the bourgeoisie, but under Stalin the workers lost such slight economic power as they had had, including even the protection of their trade unions, for not they, but the Stalin bureaucracy was the new ruling class put into power by the 1917 Revolution. They were all the more easily subdued since Lenin and Trotsky, in the early years of

that revolution, had broken the workers' own instruments of political and economic power: the Soviets and the workers' committees which for a brief time ran the factories. The workers were easily dispossessed by Lenin and Stalin because they had never possessed in the first place.

This chronic impotence of the working class has forced latter-day Marxists into apologetics whose metaphysical nature contrasts amusingly with Marxism's claim to being a materialistic doctrine. When one is indelicate enough to refer to the great mass of evidence by now available on the subject, one is met with indulgent smiles. First of all, the Marxists explain, the trade union bureaucrats and/or the Communists are traitors, *misleaders* of labour, their policies are anti-working class, and they maintain their control through force and fraud. If one presses the matter and asks why, if the workers have been successfully gulled and coerced for a century, they will be able to assert themselves in the future, one discovers that when a Marxist talks about "working class aims" and "working class consciousness", he means nothing so vulgar as the actual here-and-now behaviour of workers but rather what the workers *would* want and *would* do if they knew what their "real" interests were. Since the proletarian rarely does know his "real" interests and constantly tends to identify his interests with those of his exploiters, the result is that his "real" behaviour Marxistically speaking is usually in conflict with his really real behaviour, so that socialism becomes an ideal which the workers are assumed to cherish in their hearts but which they rarely profane by putting into action. (As Alfred Braunthal has put it: "the mystic cult of The Masses, who always feel the right way but always act the wrong way".) A metaphysical distinction between two kinds of reality is involved here. Thus a Marxist exults over the rise of the British Labour Party because it is a labour party (metaphysical reality) and at the same time denounces its entire leadership as traitors to the working class (materialistic reality). This produces a position as theoretically impregnable as it is practically sterile. The rank-and-file—suppressed, passive, coerced—is always judged on the basis not of what it does but of what it is assumed to want to do,

while the leadership, which is seen as the active, coercive party, is always judged by what it does. That perhaps the leadership is a true expression of the needs and desires of the ranks, if we look at the matter only from a historical-materialistic standpoint—this idea is much too simple for a Marxist.

I have no objection to basing one's politics on a metaphysical, unprovable value judgment that people *should* want certain things—in fact, that is just what I think one ought to do. But I object to metaphysical assumptions being smuggled into a doctrine which affects to be materialistic. This is confusing both intellectually and practically, and is simply a way of avoiding the unpleasant reality. The real reality, that is.

From "The Root Is Man", 1953

THE DEATH OF ROOSEVELT

OF ALL the reactions to Franklin Roosevelt's death—including the little girl in Spartansburg, N.C., who said, "Mummy, I believe that with President Roosevelt up there with God, we'll soon win the war"—none struck me as more significant than the remark someone told me one liberal journalist made to another: "Now we'll have to grow up."

The unexpected, to me at least, violence of the public reaction to Roosevelt's death seems to show that he had indeed become the Father of His Country, using the term in the Freudian rather than the Fourth-of-July sense.

A reader sends in a letter from an *Ensign* in the Navy, which reads in part:

The word of our President's death still shocks me, three days later. . . . It is not the shock of familiarity suddenly disappearing, nor is it the sadness of seeing people cry. It is a deep and terrifying distress, both at the personal loss and of the consequences. Roosevelt believed in us—as we believed in him. He fought for us, as we fight for him. This is the greatness of democracy.

He is dead. The steps he made forward must now be marched again, step by step. We and other Americans spent time arguing fine points of ideas. . . . The fine points must now be forgotten. . . . We must mass behind Truman. . . . How much did Roosevelt mean? He was a great friend, and his loss has murdered sleep. It is the end of an era. It is the beginning of a refrigerated, bathtubbed, toastered, newsreel society that runs on electricity alone, without a soul, without a leader, without life.

I have been amazed at my sorrow. Suddenly I see the collapse of Liberalism, the end of a United World, the death as well of Henry Wallace, of Labour, of Human Rights. We must fight—harder and more sincerely than ever before. And

we must try harder to understand, because we are more alone. . . .

In its sentimentality and its panicky Leader-worship, the Ensign's letter is a naïve expression of the liberal reaction to Roosevelt's death. For Roosevelt had become the Father especially of the left-of-centre section of American society. This was an unhealthy state of affairs, both politically and psychologically, and would have been objectionable even had Roosevelt been a far wiser and more benevolent Father than he was. Rebellion against paternal authority is the road to maturity for society as for the individual; in this sense, while one naturally is sorry to see anyone die, one must regard Roosevelt's death as a gain. Perhaps the American labour movement will now grow up—though the removal of Father by sudden death seems a little too easy a solution.

The "New Deal" ended in 1937, when three great turning points occurred: (1) the defeat of the "Little Steel" strike when the CIO foolishly relied on Roosevelt's support—and didn't get it—against the terrorism of the steel companies, a defeat which crippled the union movement until the outbreak of war caused a labour shortage; (2) the severe depression which began that fall and lasted until the war refloated the American economy, a depression which came about when Roosevelt, yielding to right-wing pressure, drastically cut down Government spending earlier in the year; (3) Roosevelt's "Quarantine the Aggressor" speech a few weeks after the first stock-market break, in which he announced a pro-war, interventionist policy. After 1937, with the exception of the Wages & Hours Act the following year, no more major social legislation was enacted. Manœuvring the country into the war (which was, of course, essential for America's national interests under a capitalist system), preparing for war, and then fighting the war—these made up the content of Roosevelt's policies in the last eight years of his life. By the time he died, he had emerged as the Commander-in-Chief, the implacable executioner of the Enemy peoples (his last State document, appropriately enough, dealt with the necessity for punishing and controlling Japan for

generations), the originator of the appalling "unconditional surrender" policy, which he forced on the reluctant Churchill at Casablanca. He is often compared to Lincoln and Wilson, but there was in him little of that humanity which the former, for all his unscrupulous politicking, often showed, or of the genuine liberal idealism of the latter. In the last few years, he had even grown cynically weary of the pretence of humane and progressive aims, declaring the New Deal was dead, and the Atlantic Charter not to be taken seriously.

Yet when he died, he was mourned as a great humanitarian and the Father of the common people. The myth was still intact. By this, we may measure the deterioration of our politics in the last two generations.

May, 1945

TOTALITARIAN LIBERALISM

PEOPLE OFTEN ask what one means by "totalitarian liberalism". The expression sounds like a simple term of abuse. It has a definite meaning, however, which may be suggested by the following examples of "totalitarian liberal" thinking, drawn from recent issues of *The New Republic*:*

I

Words should not intimidate us. Compulsory labour is not always slave labour; neither is it, of course, the free labour of peacetime. Compulsory labour becomes slave labour only when it is used in the interest of enriching private individuals and groups. But compulsory labour at critical moments in the life of a nation, used in the interests of society, is not slavery.

It is true, of course, that the use of compulsory labour poses the problem of the social order in all its sharpness. From this point of view, in the USSR, where there is no private profit and where all labour is performed in the service of society . . . the compulsory labour of both the Soviet citizens and the German workers will be most efficient.

(A. Yugow, "Shall German Labour Rebuild Europe"; *The New Republic*, May 7.)

* The other great source, of course, would be *The Nation*. There is a perceptible difference, however, between the two: *The Nation* is more fuzzy minded, naïve and "idealistic" than its colleague; it adopts approximately the same attitudes towards the Big Three, the Great Experiment of Comrade Stalin and World War II, but its betrayal of liberal principles is performed with a virginal innocence, a do-gooder enthusiasm which is quite foreign to the more cool and sophisticated tone of *The New Republic*. The editors of the latter magazine seem to have arrived, consciously, at a "totalitarian liberal" philosophy which the editors of *The Nation* still reject on the conscious level (while constantly forced to accept it in practice and piecemeal). The result is that *The Nation* sometimes prints honest articles and still has a crevice open to the impact of reality, while *The New Republic* is almost hermetically sealed against critical protest. The result is also, taken another way, that *The New Republic* is *intellectually* the better magazine, just as *The Nation* is *morally* the better.

2

Facts do not mean much to the Germans, who live in a world of unreality shaped in accordance with their wishful thinking, their "ideology". . . . Nazi education heightened this attitude by frustrating—under pain of punishment—every attempt at independent political thinking. . . . Hitler knew the Germans and how to influence them. . . . Our approach must be . . . to hammer home the truth that it was Germany which started the war and plunged the whole of humanity into unspeakable misery—the Germans, not the "Jews" or the "Bolsheviks" or the "plutocrats" or the "British imperialists". . . . They must be faced continuously with the basic fact of their collective guilt. As Hitler said: "The most brilliant propaganda technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly and with unflagging attention: it must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over . . ." We must never forget that our propaganda—or educational effort—is directed toward Germans, not toward Americans.

(Alfred Kantorowicz, "The OWI in Germany"; *The New Republic*, May 14.)

3

The hue and cry is ever more frequently raised nowadays that the plan for an international security organization drafted at Dumbarton Oaks institutionalizes a system in which the so-called small nations are at the mercy of the big powers. . . . The point really at issue, however, is not the big powers' ability to intervene in a small country's internal affairs, but the wise use of the power of intervention when a small country's domestic politics seem to endanger peace. . . .

A genuinely democratic and peaceful country need not fear the intervention of a well-intentioned big power. The recent Finnish elections are interesting in this connection. The issue at stake was Finland's readiness for peaceful co-

operation with Russia. A few days before the elections, Premier Paasikivi had warned his people that "new men must be elected to the Diet instead of those who during the past years followed the wrong policy" so that "a co-operation policy can be followed which will arouse confidence in the Soviet Union and the other United Nations". The Finnish people took this advice to heart. The new pro-Soviet Democratic Union made a decisive show of strength. . . .

What would have happened if the elections had strengthened the anti-democratic and anti-Soviet forces? They were certainly a test of a big power's sincerity in abiding by the results of a free expression of the people's will. *Pravda* bluntly stated the alternative on March 12, saying that "under the present circumstances, the elections in Finland cannot be considered as Finland's exclusively internal affair". In other words, no country, big or small, can be permitted to have just any government it pleases. As it is the responsibility of the big nations to use their power wisely in their relations with the small ones, so the latter are equally obligated to conduct their internal affairs in a way which arouses confidence on the part of the big powers.

(Editorial: "On War and Politics"; *The New Republic*, April 2.)

From these texts, some basic feature of "totalitarian liberalism" may be generalized:

1. *Principles yield to circumstances.* Here we find anti-liberal policies advocated in order to arrive at "practical" solutions. The "practicality" of these solutions is not in the sphere of human interests but in that of the existing power structure. Slavery is abhorrent to liberal principles, but not when used "in the interests of society". The "interests of society" would seem at first to be a general principle (however open to question), but closer inspection reveals that by it is meant the interests of the existing state systems of the United Nations, especially Russia, and that Hitler's use of forced labour is not intended to be included thereunder. So, too, irrational demagoguery is abhorrent to liberalism, but in dealing with *Germans*, it is permissible to use Hitler's propaganda methods. This leads us to:

2. *A double standard of political morality is employed.* "We" may do things with impunity and even approbation which become crimes against humanity if "they" do them. Slave labour, demagoguery, imperialist domination of small nations smell to heaven in Nazi hands but give off sweet perfume in "ours".

3. *Effective power carries its own justification; to be weak is the only unforgivable crime.* Here No. 3 is especially striking. The big powers have *rights* (which they are exhorted to exercise "wisely"), the small ones have *responsibilities*. Even if we accept this weighting of the scales, who is to determine when the big fellows are "wisely" exercising their rights, and when the small fry are living up to their responsibilities? Not only is it left up to the big powers to decide when a small nation's domestic policies—*domestic*, mind you—are "endangering peace", but no principles are laid down by which the big powers are supposed to be guided; their only criterion is to be—actually!—whether the small nations' policies "arouse confidence" in them. But what if, say, Sweden, feels no "confidence" in, say, Russia's domestic policies, feeling they are undemocratic and peace-endangering? It is not hard to guess the reaction of *The New Republic's* editors to such a situation; nor Stalin's. He would instantly lose *his* confidence in *Sweden*, we may be sure, just as Hitler lost *his* confidence in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Holland, etc. If "confidence" is the point, it is hard to see why *The New Republic* got so excited about Nazi Germany; and if the editors reply that the Nazis violated certain general principles, then one may ask them why they no longer refer to these principles.

4. *Abstractly put: the form is liberal, the content totalitarian.* Slave Labour, Nazi propaganda methods, and imperialism are justified, respectively, in the name of social progress, democratic re-education, and world peace.

5. *Concretely put: Soviet Russia is the repository of all political virtue.* Here we have a nation whose governmental system is so democratic, progressive, and peace loving that it can transmute the base metal of slavery into "service for society", and is praised for its devotion to peace and democracy when it threatens to intervene in a weak neighbour's elections.

6. *Society is the end: human beings the means.* Hence, no concern

for the Rights of Man (or of nations), for even-handed justice or the freedom of the individual, but simply for the effective perpetuation of the existing social systems. The editors praise the Finnish people not for progressing towards a richer democratic life in their elections but for "arousing confidence" in their great imperialist neighbour by electing pro-Moscow representatives. And Yugow actually makes the *efficiency* of Soviet compulsory labour an argument in its favour.

August, 1945

USA V. USSR

THE SUPERIORITY of Communism over Nazism as an ideology for export is manifest if one compares Hitler's speeches with Stalin's. The former are hysterical: full of violent emotion, self-contradictory, convincing only to those within the circle of the speaker's neurosis. The latter, paranoid: sober, ploddingly consistent, entirely convincing so long as the central delusion is not questioned. And it has been hard for us to question because it preserves the *means* of 19th-century Progressivism—such as rational planning, scientific advance, democracy, popular education, industrialization—while quietly dropping overboard the humanitarian *ends* which led both Marxism and bourgeois liberalism to accept these means. Unlike the Nazis, whose ideology was consistent with their practice, the Communists' practice sharply contradicts their ideology. Hitler said frankly that he was going to exterminate the Jews and make the Germans the master race of Europe; Stalin urges the economic rationality of collectivization (i.e., the extermination of the kulaks) and the building of people's democracy (i.e., the subordination of Europe to Russia). It is the SS man in his raven black uniform with the death's head insignia as against the Commissar—or, more lately, the People's Minister—in his business suit with a fountain pen clipped in his breast pocket. We are slowly learning that the Commissar is even more deadly than the SS man.

Our education has been slow because our Communists and fellow travellers have until recently been generally accepted as part of the liberal-labour movement. Compare, for example, "America First" (1938) with the Wallace campaign (1948). The historical situations are similar: an "unsatisfied", expanding young empire in conflict with the older, sated imperialisms of USA and England; totalitarianism against democratic capitalism; native movements which pretend to be seeking world peace, and enrol their mass following on that basis, but actually

advocate a policy of appeasement of the imperialist competitor, whose leaders are, furthermore, not too unsympathetic with that competitor's government. Yet consider how widely the two movements differ.

America First was defensive on Nazism: its leaders felt obliged constantly to reiterate their opposition. But Wallace and his backers openly denounce the USA as the main threat to peace and constantly defend Russian acts of aggression (as in the Czech putsch). America First was not run by Bundists, nor was it closely correlated to German foreign policy; such tactics would have been politically absurd: only home-grown fascism, of the Long-Smith-Coughlin variety, has ever had a mass base in USA; Nazism appealed only to German-Americans. But the Wallace movement is run by veteran Stalinoids and is intimately correlated to Soviet foreign policy (cf. the 24-hour reply Stalin gave to Wallace's recent "open letter"; or the campaign to block the Marshall Plan). Wallace devotes one-fifth of his current campaign book, *Toward World Peace*, to a detailed defence of Russian foreign policy and a mendacious whitewash of such internal Soviet scandals as the suppression of the Trotsky opposition, the forced-collectivization famines, the Moscow Trials, and the forced-labour camps. Can one imagine the America Firsters issuing a similar campaign document defending the concentration camps and the Reichstag fire trial?

In short, Communism is on the offensive, morally and ideologically, while fascism was on the defensive even ten years ago and today—since, after all, Hitler lost the war—is negligible as a force in American politics.

Millions of sincerely democratic-minded Americans still regard an exposé of the truth about Stalinism as "red-baiting", though it never occurred to them to call the critics of Nazism "fascist-baiters". The really frightening thing is that even in the USA, which came out of the last war unscathed, prosperous and well fed, the Communists have been able to mount a campaign like the Wallace movement, and to attract to it in general the very people whom the non-Stalinist left must look to for any serious challenge to the status quo: the younger

generation—college students and veterans—plus the more rebellious and idealistic of the older generation, including, alas, many pacifists.

IN THE THIRTIES, some of us became—or thought we had become—fairly well-educated about the Soviet Union. The 1932–33 famines plus the Moscow Trials plus the Communist tactics in the Spanish Civil War plus the partition of Poland and the attack on Finland—the accumulation seemed conclusive. Yet I have recently come to think that I seriously underestimated the evils of Stalinism and the degree of continuity between it and the Bolshevism of the first revolutionary decade. Current books like Shub's *Lenin* and Gliksman's *Tell the West!* have been responsible for this change of mind; as also a review of the whole literature I recently undertook. "What a swindle!" I kept thinking as I read the first-hand exposés of Soviet Russia that were published in the twenties and early thirties—books like Emma Goldman's *My Disillusionment in Russia* (1923); *Letters from Russian Prisons* (1925); Malcolm Muggeridge's *Winter in Moscow* (1934); and Vladimir Tchernavin's *I Speak for the Silent* (1935)—and recalled how, in my Trotskyist days, I dismissed them as bourgeois fabrications. Has there ever been a political imposture on this scale?

The younger generation in America, on the other hand, seems to be not even at the level of sophistication I had reached in 1938. The experience of the thirties is not theirs; USSR to them is the wartime ally of the "peace-loving democracies" against fascism. This winter I spoke on Wallace on several campuses—NYU, CCNY, Brooklyn, and the New School in New York, as well as Chicago, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Antioch; when I compared Wallace's demagoguery to Hitler's or spoke of Communism and Fascism as similar political formations, a perceptible shudder ran through the audience.

A "scissors" seems to be developing: we middle-aged former fellow-travellers of the Bolsheviks are coming to believe, as evidence accumulates, that things are even worse with USSR than we had thought ten years ago. While "the youth" today

is more ignorant than we were then; and even less critical of the Potemkin Villages of Stalinism.

The scissors gape even wider because of a difference in moral atmosphere. We of the thirties were idealists and enthusiasts, ardently believing in certain general principles; when we realized that these were being negated in practice, we turned against Soviet Communism. As long as we could either deny or overlook the terrible facts, we accepted the Soviet Myth; when the facts mounted too high to be ignored, we gave up the Myth. After all, we came out of the fat and peaceful twenties. But the younger generation, which grew up in an atmosphere of war, death camps and saturation bombings, is both more cynical than we were and more sentimental; they seem to have developed a peculiar combination of idealism and pragmatism. They don't deny the facts; they simply retort (*a*) we're just as bad, which is not true, and even if it were true, would not be to the point; and (*b*) how could they have done anything else, encircled by imperialist enemies?—an excuse which applies equally to Hitler's system.

Attacked on the level of socialist principles, the neo-Stalinist of the younger generation brushes aside such arguments as abstract idealism. But when the attack is pragmatic, and the facts are insisted on, he justifies the worst horrors as allegedly necessary steps to a highly abstract and speculative future end: the building of a socialist society. A good pragmatist would define USSR by what it does; a good idealist by how it measures up against some ethical norm; either procedure would puncture the Soviet Myth. But the neo-Stalinists work both sides of the street.

LET us admit at once—let us, indeed, insist on the point—that all the criticisms made of USSR could also be made of USA. Ours, like theirs, is an unjust society, where the few have too much and the many too little. Ours is an imperialist State, like theirs, whose leaders lie like troopers and equivocate like lawyers; a militarist State, like theirs, busily preparing for World War III; a repressive State, like theirs, which is about

to draft its youth, in peacetime, against their will. The American common people, like their Russian brothers, are kicked around from cradle to grave by their Betters, and are inhibited from leading satisfying lives by a massive structure of ingenious and irrational institutions. Our culture, too, is a debased mass culture, ruled by commerce as theirs is by the Central Committee, Etcetera, etcetera.

The difference is partly one of degree: in USSR all the above unpleasantnesses are carried a great deal farther than they are in USA. The rich are richer and the poor, poorer. Imperialism is more vicious: USA bribes nations with massive capital exports (Marshall Plan), but USSR either absorbs them by force (the Baltic nations) or subjugates them by installing a Communist police state (the rest of Eastern Europe). Militarism is more blatant: USSR spends more of its national income on war preparation than USA, has four or five times as many of its citizens under arms, indoctrinates its children more systematically with militarist ideas and dolls up its generals more resplendently. Repression is much more severe: the American common people have too few civil liberties, the Russians have none at all. Social institutions are more massively impenetrable to popular pressures: the American school system is run by locally elected bodies, the Russian direct by the State. Political institutions are less democratic: Congress and the President do not truly represent the people, but at least they can be thrown out every two or four years, and at least they exercise power within the limits of written rules and after public debate; the 15 or 17 members of the Central Committee rule so far beyond public knowledge and legal control that they could tomorrow order all redheads to be "resettled" in Kamchatka—and they would be obeyed. Culture is more totally debased: in USA, artists, writers, and intellectuals with the determination or the cash can ignore the commercial market and produce decent work; in USSR, there are no loopholes—the artist cannot create independently of the Central Committee's directives since the State controls the art galleries, the orchestras and concert halls, the theatres and the publishers.

There are, further, certain ways in which USSR is not

comparable, even in degree, to USA or to any other civilized country today. Is there any other major nation where slave labour exists on a massive scale? Where all strikes are forbidden by law? Where over half the State budget is raised by the most regressive form of taxation: sales taxes, which fall most heavily on those least able to pay? Where colonels get thirty times the pay of privates? Where no figures on national income have been published since 1938 and no price indices since 1931? Whose soldiers, in foreign lands, go crazy at the sight of such luxuries as bicycles, watches, and leather shoes? Whose DP's open their veins rather than return to the motherland? Whose secret police have their own secret courts, which try and sentence without appeal? Where children are officially applauded as patriots for denouncing their parents to the authorities? Where the political authorities instruct writers on prose style, movie directors on montage and composers on the proper use of polyphony and dissonance? Where citizens may be imprisoned for talking to foreigners? Where emigration is forbidden, and the families of illegal émigrés are punished whether or not they had knowledge of the attempt?

But the differences go deeper. Not only is Reaction, as it was called in the simple old days, carried much farther in USSR than in USA. But this is not done there, as here, furtively and apologetically, but rather as a matter of principle, in the name of Socialism, People's Democracy and other high notions. The powerful workings of ideology transmute these ugly realities into their opposite: they become the principles of a New Order which is asserted to be the glorious reverse of the undoubtedly wicked Old Order.

This is the Big Lie which Hitler once amateurishly peddled, but which the Communists are really putting over. It is not just the absence of truth; it is the very reverse of truth. Black is not called Blue or Dark Brown, but White. The political system which has gone far beyond Bismarck or Louis Napoleon in authoritarian repression is proclaimed as the realization of the programme laid down in the Communist Manifesto. The society in which strikes are outlawed and workers are legally tied to their jobs is presented as the workers' fatherland. The

world's most chauvinist and militarist government is sincerely believed by millions of Americans to be striving for world peace against the evil machinations of the State Department and the British Foreign Office. The empire that has added vast new satrapies since 1945, while its two chief rivals have either confined themselves to Pacific atolls or (reluctantly) freed their richest subject domains, is gilded by ideology with the moral splendour of anti-imperialism. Most striking of all, a double standard of international morality has been insinuated into the minds of millions of non-Communist workers and intellectuals. Truman is denounced for his Doctrine, which is indeed an evil thing; but the more far-reaching interference of the Communists in other nations' affairs is passed over in silence. The American Legion is properly excoriated for its flag-waving jingoism, but the same thing in USSR becomes transmuted into People's Patriotism in Defence of the Socialist Fatherland.

The list could be extended. The point would remain the same: the most militarist, imperialist, anti-democratic, and reactionary nation in the world is precisely the one on which millions of Americans and Europeans have fixed their aspirations for world peace, national independence, democracy, and human progress. This is a Fact of Life today, and one that must be faced, whether one is a liberal, a Marxist socialist, a conservative, or, as in the case of the present writer, an anarchist and pacifist. The way to face it, in my opinion, is to tell the truth about USSR, without suppression and without compromise. If there is a chance of avoiding World War III, it must be based on truth and not on lies. And certainly not on The Big Lie.

Spring, 1948

THE GREAT THAW

I MUST ADMIT that the extent of The Great Thaw has taken me by surprise—it's by no means the first time that the locomotive of history has run on a different time-table from the one I'd been using. I never expected to hear the top Soviet leaders denounce Stalin in the same terms we Trotskyists used in the thirties: dangerous madman, criminal bungler, betrayer of the revolution, etc. The polar rigours of Stalin's system have moderated since his death, until now the climate has warmed up to the level of Northern Greenland.

The question comes down, essentially, to whether this thaw is merely seasonal—a strategic retreat—or whether it is, so to speak, geological—a permanent shrinking of the Stalinist ice-cap. It is too soon, by ten or twenty years, to give even an approximate answer, but my guess is that the change is geological and that something new has happened.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt gave brilliant and persuasive expression to the theory that totalitarian systems like those of Hitler and Stalin cannot be modified in a more humane direction, that their long-range tendency (granting temporary retreats) must be toward an ever more extreme reduction of humanity to atomized, helpless, sub-human masses whose reflexes can be manipulated as freely as were those of Pavlov's dogs. Her theory emphasizes the irrational, neurotic aspects of totalitarian behaviour, denying that it can be explained in terms of Marxian economic interest or even of a Machiavellian drive to power, and insisting that the paranoiac will to exterminate all obstacles in the way of reshaping the actual world in the form of a monstrous and illusory ideal—even if the easily predictable result is ruinous, as in Stalin's decimation of his own military and industrial leaders just before the war, or in Hitler's terroristic policy in occupied Russia, which forced the population to become his enemies instead of his allies against the hated Stalin—that the free exercise

of this will is more important to the totalitarian leaders than success, or even survival. This theory, I think, explains the actual behaviour of Hitler and Stalin better than the kind of rational and materialistic interpretations we are used to. However, like Marx, Arendt is an enthusiastic generalizer, a system builder, and she, too, believes in an inherent logic, a big basic pattern which cannot be violated. Although Hitlerism did perish only in the ruins of Germany, as her theory would suggest, it seems to me by no means sure that Khrushchev & Co. are fated either to resume the Stalinist road after a temporary retreat or else to go down in the flames of war or revolution.

A strong case can be made, historically, for the temporary-retreat thesis. The alternation of crisis and relaxation is striking in Soviet history: the rigours of War Communism finally producing the Kronstadt revolt, to which Lenin reacted with the NEP; Stalin replacing NEP, once he had consolidated his power, in 1929 with the First Five Year Plan and the forced collectivization programme, his retreating in turn, when the severity of Plan and collectivization had become unendurable, in 1932, with the "dizzy from success" speech; the "Indian Summer" of 1933-6, when the political climate grew milder, art and letters had a breathing spell and the new, super-democratic "Constitution" was drafted by a committee headed by Bukharin; and then the Moscow Trials and the great purges bursting on the Soviet world like a thunderclap out of a clear blue sky, Bukharin and the majority of his fellow Constitution-drafters being executed as traitors. In Stalin's Russia it was always not only darkest before dawn but also lightest before sunset.

But the question is, precisely, whether Khrushchev's Russia is Stalin's Russia. Was Stalin, as Arendt's theory implies, a normal expression of the Soviet system or was he a peculiar individual who cast his morbid shadow over a whole period of Russian history? Granted that his death found Russia in a severe crisis, compounded of the tough Zhdanov post-war domestic policies, the discontent of workers over the resumption of the prewar guns-not-butter economic policy and of peasants

over the attempt to still further extend State control over farming, the fears of the bureaucracy at the hints, in the last year of Stalin's life, of a new series of purges and the rearming of the USA as a result of the Soviet-backed invasion of South Korea—granted this crisis, I think the reaction of Stalin's heirs has gone farther than a mere strategic retreat. Some of their concessions were indeed comparable to the kind Stalin made when forced to: the easing of pressure on intellectuals and artists, the increase in consumer goods, the giving up of the unpopular super-collectives, the execution of the MVD head, Beria. But others have no parallel under Stalin: the public admission that the charges against the doctors in the "Kremlin poison plot", made in the last month of Stalin's life, were phony; the softening of the labour camp regimen and the release of many prisoners; the avoidance of wholesale bloodshed in dealing with the East German revolt; Khrushchev and his colleagues "going to Carossa", i.e., travelling to Tito to apologize to him for Stalin's expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Third International.

Above all, there is the current full dress attack on the Stalin myth. Had Khrushchev & Co. had merely in mind a temporary retreat, they would have made such concessions as they felt necessary without raising any general issues, which would only make it harder to reinstate the old system later on. Instead, they have launched a frontal attack on the ideological keystone of Stalinism, the Great Leader principle, and on the reputation of Stalin himself. In his speech to the Party congress (which has not yet been published, but of which the N.Y. *Times* of March 17 last, via "diplomatic channels", gave a full report), Khrushchev said: "We never knew when we entered Stalin's presence whether we would come out alive; he kept us all in terror; no one knew upon whom the next blow would fall." Here, I think, is the nub of the matter. As Arendt has observed, the totalitarian system means that the personal interests—and even the lives—of everyone right up to the very top of the pyramid may be sacrificed at any moment "for the good of the cause". But to endure such a system takes fanatics. Trotsky used to call Stalin the man of Thermidor; he was wrong; as

speedily became apparent when Stalin, having exiled his great opponent, proceeded to put into effect Trotsky's basic programme of collectivization and industrialization; Stalin was a Jacobin like Trotsky, not a restorer of the old order. Only now has Thermidor come to the Bolshevik Revolution—and a very good thing, too.

As Barras and his fellow members of the Directoire—another substitution of collective leadership, by the way, for the Great Leader—were scared for their own skins by the Jacobin proscriptions, as they were weary of bloodthirsty principles, monstrous idealisms, the boring repression in the name of revolutionary virtue of all human, lively instincts, and simply wanted a chance to enjoy their power safely, selfishly and corruptly, so with Khrushchev and *his* Directoire. There is something touching about his ebullient public behaviour since Stalin died, his back-slapping and joking with Western diplomats and reporters, his wearing of funny native hats on his Asiatic tour, his expansive vulgarity in the style of a Chicago ward politician. He is like a boy let out of school; this is his real style—the coarse geniality of a *nouveau riche*—and this is the real style of his colleagues. Even Molotov has loosened up a little.

Totalitarianism bends human nature, puts a terrible strain on the normal, mediocre man. When the pressure is removed, when Robespierre, Hitler, Stalin die, then human nature springs back to its normal shape, which is perhaps not very inspiring but is certainly preferable to the nightmare form given it by the totalitarians.

As for the future. So long as the essentials of Stalinism remain, there will be, of course, a possibility that another Great Leader will find them ready to his hand. To date, these essentials have not been touched. There is still only one party, and candidates for election all put forward the same programme. The trade unions are still organs of the State rather than independent representatives of the workers, strikes are still forbidden and workers cannot shop around for the best wages and conditions. The peasants are still forcibly collectivized. Art and letters are still under the direct control of the political bureaucracy.

The secret police still enjoy unlimited and undefined powers of arrest, and the right of every citizen to a public trial conducted according to a written code of law is still not recognized. The dilemma facing the Thermidoreans is that if they don't institute such reforms, a new Great Leader may take advantage of the system, as Stalin did; while if they do, the attempt to modulate away from totalitarianism may release such popular unrest as to give some aspiring Great Leader a chance to take over. It is not clear yet what the reaction has been to the first big step toward reform, the destruction of the Great Leader myth. When this is known, one can speculate on the probable effects of further advances toward the *status quo ante* 1917—the modest degree of freedom achieved under Czar Nicholas II and swept away by the Bolsheviks in the name of the socialist liberation of humanity. Meanwhile, one can only say to comrade Khrushchev, echoing Hamlet (and Marx): “Well dug, old mole!”

Encounter, July, 1956

SAINTS

GANDHI

"A moment before he was shot, he said—some witnesses believed he was speaking to the assassin—'You are late.'"

N. Y. World-Telegram, January 30, 1948

AND INDEED the man who killed Gandhi with three revolver shots *was* late—about two years late. The communal massacres showed that Gandhi's teaching of non-violence had not penetrated to the Indian masses. His life work had been in vain—or at least it now appeared that he had taught a "non-violence of the weak" which had been effective against the British but that the more difficult "non-violence of the strong" he had been unable to teach. He insisted on his failure constantly, and constantly thought of death. "I am in the midst of flames," he wrote last spring. "Is it the kindness of God or His irony that the flames do not consume me?" One imagines that he experienced a dreadful joy in the split-second he saw the gun aimed at him.

Three historical events have moved me deeply of recent years: the murder of Trotsky, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the murder of Gandhi. That all three should be simply catastrophes—hopeless, destructive, painful—is in the style of our period. The Spanish Civil War was the last of the 19th-century type of political tragedies: the fight was lost, as in 1848 or the Paris Commune, but it had been a fight; there was hope while it was going on, and defeat might be due to some temporary relation of forces; there was a basis for a future effort.

But Trotsky and Gandhi were killed not during their great time of struggle to realize "Utopian" ideals, not while they were still fighting with a hope of success, but after their ideas—or at least their tactics—had been shown by the brutal logic of events to be inadequate. They were not shot in battle. They were executed. And their executioner was not the oppressive, conservative forces they had devoted their lives to fighting—

the bourgeoisie and the British imperialists—but the scum that had frothed up from their own heroic struggle to liberate mankind: young fanatics representing a new order—of Stalinism and of Hindu nationalism—which is hopeless, deadening, corrupting and monstrous, but which is also, alas, partly the product of their own revolutionary efforts. In the 19th century, czars and governors and secret-police chiefs were assassinated by radicals; today, it is revolutionaries (out of power) like Trotsky and Gandhi who are killed by our modern Nihilists, while Stalin and Hitler and Zhdanov and Himmler and Mussolini, and Molotov escape (unless they lose a war). *Our* Nihilists have terribly perverted Liebknecht's slogan: "The main Enemy is at Home". Or perhaps they are just more prudent than their 19th-century ancestors. Which would be in keeping, too.

Gandhi, like Trotsky, was killed after his most profound ideas and his lifelong political activity had been rebuffed by History. But, also like Trotsky, he was still alive and kicking, still throwing out imaginative concepts. The ideologue is baffled, but the human being—and by this sentimental phrase I mean the acute intelligence as much as the moralist—is not through: he has plenty of inspirations and surprises in store for us. Both men were still giving, by their personal example and still more by their unwearied experimenting with general principles, some kind of meaning, of *consciousness* to modern political life. Their assassins killed not only two men, but also two cultures. Which makes it all the more painful.

There was obvious irony in the great pacifist being killed by a gunman. But there was also an æsthetic fitness. Gandhi was the last eminent personage who insisted on dealing directly with people, reasoning with them face to face as individuals, not as crowds roped off, watched by plain-clothes men, sealed safely behind bullet-proof glass. It was a matter of principle with him not to deny anyone access to him, mentally or physically. He refused all police protection. I have heard people say he was a damn fool and got what he might expect to get. They are, of course, right. Our world is so structured that the "public man" can survive only by being private, and the

most dangerous thing he can do is to meet his public face to face.

Gandhi was the last political leader in the world who was a person, not a mask or a radio voice or an institution. The last on a human scale. The last for whom I felt neither fear nor contempt nor indifference but interest and affection. He was dear to me—I realize it now better than I did when he was alive—for all kinds of reasons. He believed in love, gentleness, persuasion, simplicity of manners, and he came closer to “living up to” these beliefs than most people I know—let alone most Big Shots, on whom the pressures for the reverse must be very powerful. (To me, the wonder is not that Gandhi often resorted to sophistry or flatly went back on some of his ideas, but that he was able to put into practice as many of them as he did. I speak from personal experience.) He was dear to me because he had no respect for railroads, assembly-belt production, and other knick-knacks of liberalistic Progress, and insisted on examining their human (as against their metaphysical) value. Also because he was clever, humorous, lively, hard-headed, and never made speeches about Fascism, Democracy, the Common Man, or World Government. And because he had a keen nose for the concrete, homely “details” of living which make the real difference to people but which are usually ignored by everybody except poets. And finally because he was a good man, by which I mean not only “good” but also “man”.

This leads into the next point. Many pacifists and others who have an ethical—and really admirable—attitude toward life are somewhat boring. Their point of view, their writing and conversation are wholly sympathetic but also a little on the dull side.

Intellectually, their ideas lack subtlety and logical structure. Ethically, they are *too* consistent; they don't sense the tragedy of life, the incredible difficulty of actually putting into practice an ethical concept. They have not succumbed to temptation because they have never been tempted; they are good simply because it has never occurred to them to be bad. They are, in a word, unworldly. Gandhi was not at all unworldly. He was full of humour, slyness, perversity, and—above all—practicality.

Indeed, the very thing which leads people to think of him as unworldly—his ascetic ideas about diet, household economy, and sexual intercourse—seems to me to show his worldliness, or at least his imaginative grasp of The World: how could anyone be so concerned about such matters, even though in a negative sense, without a real feeling for their importance in human life, which in turn must come from a deep drive on his part *toward* gluttony, luxury, and sexual indulgence?

The Marxists, those monks of politics, were shocked by his intimacy with rich men like Birla and Tata, just as the Pharisees, the Trotskyists of their day, were shocked by Christ's sitting at table with bartenders. (The Marxist has a richer intellectual tradition than the pacifist, but his ethical sense is equally simplistic.) It is true that Gandhi "compromised" with the rich, those untouchables of the class struggle, living at their villas (though carrying on there his own ascetic regimen). But he also "compromised" with the poor, spending at least as much time in the "untouchable's" quarters (he constantly complains of the smells and lack of sanitation) as in the Birla Palace. In short, he practised tolerance and love to such an extent that he seems to have regarded the capitalist as well as the garbage-man as his social equal.

Winter, 1948

DOROTHY DAY

MANY PEOPLE think that Dorothy Day is a saint and that she will someday be canonized. In 1933, with the late Peter Maurin, a French-born itinerant preacher, who has been affectionately described as "an apostle on the bum" and who advocated "a Utopian Christian communism", she founded the Catholic Worker movement, and, despite her best efforts to the contrary, she still dominates it. She is a rangy woman of fifty-five whose thick grey hair is braided tightly around her small, well-shaped head. High cheekbones and slanting eyes give her a Slavic look, although her ancestry is Scotch-Irish. Her face—patient, gentle, and understanding—might suggest a passive temperament were it not for her wide, mobile mouth and the expression of her eyes, which is at times dreamily remote, at times as naïvely expectant as a young girl's, but always alive. Her own patron saint, after whom she named her only child, is the gay and impetuous Teresa of Avila, who used to pray, "May God deliver me from surly saints." In her sensible shoes and drab, well-worn clothes, Miss Day looks like an elderly schoolteacher or librarian; she has the typical air of mild authority and of being no longer surprised at anything children or book-borrowers may do. She also looks like a grandmother, which she is, for her daughter now has five children. Upon first meeting her, most people who are familiar with her career are surprised to find that, far from being dynamic, she is quiet and almost diffident. Although she has been speaking in public for years, her platform manner is retiring and hesitant, and she makes not even a stab at rhetorical effect. She has no "presence" at all, but in spite of that, or perhaps because of it, she is impressive to meet or hear, communicating a moral force compounded of openness, sincerity, earnestness, and deprecatory humour. She has lived with intellectuals all her adult life, from the time when, at the age of nineteen, she established herself in Greenwich Village society as a writer for radical publications,

but she is not one herself. She is more a feeler and a doer than a thinker. Her mind works by free association rather than logic, and her writing and public talks—"speeches" would hardly be the right word—are as haphazardly put together as her clothes. Her temperament combines mystical feeling and practicality in a way not common in the everyday world but not uncommon in the annals of hagiography.

The physical manifestations of the movement that Miss Day and Maurin founded nineteen years ago consist of the *Catholic Worker*, a monthly paper with an anti-capitalist, anti-Communist viewpoint and a circulation of fifty-eight thousand, together with fifteen so-called Houses of Hospitality, in New York and other cities, here and abroad, and eight communal farms, scattered around the country—a total of twenty-three centres where the homeless are sheltered, the hungry are fed, and the ragged are clothed. New York is the headquarters of the movement, offering benign advice and encouragement to the centres elsewhere but, with the exception of two nearby farms, exercising no direct control over them. The whole organization is operated by perhaps a hundred men and women who give all or most of their time to it without pay, living cheerfully in voluntary poverty. All are lay Catholics, and almost all are under thirty and will presently leave, after a few years of the work, to go into the world again, usually to get married and raise a family, and their places will be filled by new young volunteers. The movement is thus a kind of university, constantly taking in freshmen and graduating seniors. It is also a large family, in which the voluntary and the involuntary poor, the helpers and the helped, live together in the houses and on the farms with no more distinction in the matter of dress, manners, bed, and board than is to be found in any other family. Miss Day combines the functions of a headmistress, the cheerful glad-handing, the bringing out of shy individuals, the deft restraining of unruly ones and even the fund-raising, with those of a fond and watchful mother. She writes a lot and travels a lot, trying to persuade people that it is possible even today to live in peace and brotherhood, and recruiting new members for her staff. Wherever she is and whatever else she does during

the day, she always spends from one to two hours in prayer and meditation; her religion is the centre of her life, and it is significant that the one touch of luxury in dress she permits herself is a handsome black lace mantilla she sometimes wears to Mass.

The Catholic Workers are religious in a way that is hard for most people even to understand, let alone sympathize with. They practise their faith on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, as well as on Sundays. An eminent theologian has written that for the Anabaptists and Methodists, sects that the Catholic Workers in some ways resemble, religion ceases to be "a matter of outward forms and ordinances" and becomes "an affair of the heart". For them, too, religion is an affair of the heart, but, far from wanting to free themselves from outward forms and ordinances, they infuse their zeal into their reception of the sacraments and gladly accept the Pope's authority. As one of their admirers recently put it, "Their inner light is refracted through the hard, intricately cut prism of Catholic dogma."

"How do they stay in the Church?" is the question most often asked about the organization, the runner-up being, "What does Spellman think of them?" The latter question, at least, cannot be authoritatively answered, for the Cardinal has maintained a discreet silence on the subject. Like his predecessor, the late Cardinal Hayes, he has endorsed their works of mercy, but he will not be drawn further. Some time ago, at a reception, Miss Day tried. She asked him outright how he felt about the Workers. "You'll find that many of the bishops are on your side," the Cardinal answered, with a diplomatic smile. On most secular issues, from pacifism to psychoanalysis, the Cardinal and the Workers disagree. Perhaps one reason he doesn't "do something about it" is that his disciplinary and supervisory powers over laymen are more limited than many non-Catholics realize. Like the Pope's, they are confined to sitting in judgment on such "matters of faith and morals" as divorce and contraception and ruling on cases of error in connection with such theological dogmas as the Immaculate Conception and the recently proclaimed Assumption of the Virgin. It is true that, as Archbishop of New York, the Cardinal

exercises much the same authority over his diocese as the Pope does over the whole Church (any layman has the right to appeal to Rome, but Rome almost always backs up its bishops); it is also true that by stretching a point, or several points, he might get the Workers on a faith-and-morals charge, since they not only advocate radical ideas—not in itself prohibited—but edge into theological territory by presenting these ideas as a logical development of Catholic doctrine. However, he has stayed his hand, whether from conscience or from expediency or because the Church is a house of more mansions than are dreamed of in Paul Blanshard's philosophy.

This is not to say that the Workers' relations with the Chancery—the administrative offices of the diocese, which occupy the old Whitelaw Reid house, across Madison Avenue from St. Patrick's—are always smooth. For a Catholic, a summons to the Chancery is a summons to the headmaster's study. Miss Day has received three such summonses. Once, it was because a priest who had conducted a retreat—that is, a gathering for the purpose of prayer, meditation, and instruction—at one of the organization's farms had fallen into the error of "too vigorous spirituality" through the vehemence with which he denounced liquor, lipsticks, and the movies. Once, it was because some influential laymen had complained about the Workers' anti-capitalist propaganda. In both these instances, Msgr. Edward R. Gaffney, one of the diocesan Vicars-General, simply notified her of the complaints and added his personal admonition. The third time was more serious. In 1948, the *Catholic Worker* advised young men not to register for the draft. Although this was clearly illegal, the editors didn't hear from the F.B.I., but they did hear from Msgr. Gaffney, who summoned Miss Day and "corrected" her—that is, ordered her to cease and desist, which she did.

For all her brushes with authority, however, Miss Day is a Catholic first and a radical second. "The hierarchy permits a priest to say Mass in our chapel," she remarked to a friend not long ago. "They have given us the most precious thing of all—the Blessed Sacrament. If the Chancery ordered me to stop publishing the *Catholic Worker* tomorrow, I would."

POLITICALLY, the Catholic Workers are hard to classify. They are for the poor and against the rich, so the capitalists call them Communists; they believe in private property and don't believe in class struggle, so the Communists call them capitalists; and they are hostile to war and to the State, so both capitalists and Communists consider them crackpots. They are often taken for some kind of Communist front inside the Catholic Church, but actually the *Catholic Worker* and the Communist *Worker* have little similarity beyond their names. Being as a general rule pacifists, most Catholic Workers refuse to serve in the Army, to work in war industries and to pay federal income taxes (since most of the budget goes for war purposes) even on those rare occasions when they have enough income to pay taxes on. Despite the extreme position it takes on such issues, the organization has never had any trouble with the authorities, and Miss Day rather resents this tolerance, as a slur on its political effectiveness, just as she dislikes the protection its name gives them against local constabularies. During the strike of Ohrbach store employees in 1934, the police regularly hauled off to jail all the pickets except the Catholic Workers. "I'd as soon arrest the Holy Father himself!" exclaimed one uniformed co-religionist.

People who try to live their everyday lives according to an ideal are likely to make fools of themselves, which some critics think is just what the Catholic Workers have been doing for nearly twenty years. Others, more charitable, hold that there are two differences between their folly and plain foolishness. One is that theirs is premeditated; they are, so to speak, fools on principle. "Let us be fools for Christ," Miss Day says. "Let us recklessly act out our vision, even if we shall almost surely fail, for what the world calls failure is often, from a Christian viewpoint, success." She is also fond of quoting Saint Paul: "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise." And she points to Christ's death on the cross, which Catholic theologians call "the Folly of the Cross", as the supreme example of successful failure. The other difference is that, unlike plain fools, the Catholic Workers, in spite of the most appalling

miscalculations, cross-purposes, lack of planning and general confusion, have accomplished a lot even by worldly standards.

This second difference is not always obvious. Wherever two or three of the Workers are gathered together, chaos is almost sure also to be present. During Peter Maurin's last illness, a disciple had the happy thought of getting him to make a wire recording of some of his writings. After his death, someone who had not been alerted used the machine and innocently erased every word. The Workers' paper has a tradition of inaccuracy dating back to its founding, in 1933. Maurin's name appeared as "Maurain" throughout its first issue; its second issue was dated "June-July" and its third "July-August", an overlapping never explained and probably inexplicable; its chief artist sent in her first drawings signed "A. De Bethune", which is her name, but it came out "Ade Bethune", and has so remained to this day, Miss De Bethune apparently feeling this comes close enough. In recognition of the Workers' help to Catholics abroad after the war—among other things, *Catholic Worker* readers supplied five hundred packages of clothing and food to one Polish convent alone and completely equipped a hospital in Sicily—the Pope sent them his blessing on an ornately illuminated parchment scroll, but it is not to be seen anywhere around the *Worker* office; Miss Day thinks it got lost in moving. Several years ago, when the Workers wanted to sell one of their farms, they found they could not do so then—or, in fact, ever—because they had anchored the title firmly in midair; Miss Day holds the place in trust for the *Catholic Worker*, but the *Catholic Worker*, being unincorporated (on principle) and not a legal entity, cannot authorize her to sell its property. (The best the lawyers could suggest was that if every subscriber agreed in writing to the sale, the courts might take a lenient view of things—or, of course, might not.) There was also the woman Worker on a picket line who, asked by a passer-by what it was all about, snapped, "None of your business!"

All this notwithstanding, the Catholic Workers are in general very practical fools. The *Catholic Worker* was started not on a shoestring but on the hope of one. When the first issue appeared, the editors had ninety-two cents between them. "This

first number was planned, written, and edited in the kitchen of a tenement on Fifteenth Street, on subway platforms, on the 'L' and on the ferry," they wrote. "Next month someone may donate us an office. Who knows?" Miss Day had to sell her typewriter to help pay for the printing of the second issue. Then things improved. A sympathetic expressman gave them a desk and a filing cabinet. Visitors began to arrive in numbers, and they often helped out with work or cash. Circulation went up seven hundred per cent in the first six months—from twenty-five hundred to twenty thousand. Even the paper's finances improved slightly. "During the month \$210.55 came in (and went right out again)," the *Catholic Worker* reported in its third issue. "Every few weeks the editors were able to take to themselves five dollars salary. We live in the daily hope that someone will come in and pay the printing bill or the rent." Down through the years, someone always has. Since 1933, the Workers in New York alone have put out their monthly paper, given coffee, bread and soup twice daily to from two hundred to eight hundred men, boarded between fifty and seventy-five people a day and handed out free shoes and clothes to indeterminate thousands. It costs about forty thousand dollars a year to do these things. There have also been such occasional special outlays as thirty thousand dollars to buy the Chrystie Street house, thirty-one thousand dollars to buy the two farms the Workers own in this part of the country—one up the Hudson, at Newburgh, and the other on Staten Island—and five thousand dollars to run a special soup kitchen during the 1936 seamen's strike, which lasted two months. Sums like these are not got by wishful thinking or, in the Workers' case, by business methods.

Under Miss Day's guidance, the Catholic Workers have devised an inexpensive and effective technique of fund-raising: they pray to Saint Joseph, their patron saint. "We appealed to him for help last month," the editors wrote in the second issue of the *Catholic Worker*, "and within two weeks not only our current printing bill was paid but money was there for the February bill, also." Their creditors pray, too. "The printer called us up this morning wanting to know, affably, when we were going to pay our bill," another editorial reads. "We told

him he'd better get busy and pray for it hard." Later, the *Worker* reported, "Enough money has come in to pay \$300 to our very forbearing printer, and he says he is still praying." Things get behind sometimes—their grocery bill for the Chrystie Street house has run as high as six thousand dollars, and last fall they discovered that they owed two thousand dollars for flour alone—but sooner or later Saint Joseph is always good for the money. Their credit is solid, and their business relations—with their printer (Rogowski, on Pearl Street), their butcher (Kantor Brothers, on Essex Street) and their grocer (Di Falco, at Mott and Hester)—are friendly to the point of sentimentality; the fact that the first two are Jewish firms doesn't seem to make any difference to Saint Joseph. At the very mention of money, Miss Day grows impatient. "That is all in the hands of Saint Joseph," she once wrote in the *Catholic Worker*, apropos of a particularly huge avalanche of debts that was threatening to engulf the organization. "He is our patron and it is up to him. I haven't any doubt about it. I've seen him perform daily miracles around here."

Some of the miracles are chronic. Twice a year, the Workers print an appeal in their paper, and twice a year they get enough donations, all in small sums, to cover their ordinary running expenses. Sometimes prayer doesn't get results, but then the remedy is clear. "When things go wrong, we know we are not praying enough," Miss Day says. And sometimes Heaven doesn't respond as expected, or, indeed, as wished—a common failing of supernatural agencies, as Macbeth, for one, discovered. Once, needing a thousand dollars in a hurry, Miss Day prayed for it, and got it when her Staten Island cottage, insured for precisely that amount, promptly burned down. Her gratitude was tempered by her affection for the place, and by the fact that it was worth a lot more than a thousand dollars. "Sometimes I wish God weren't quite so literal," she said later.

THE Catholic Worker movement began one evening in December, 1932, when Miss Day came home to the tenement on East Fifteenth Street where she was living with her five-year-

old daughter, Teresa, and found a stocky, shabbily dressed elderly man, with a knobby, granite-like face and lively eyes, talking away to Teresa at the kitchen table. It was Maurin. The meeting was a case of ideological love at first sight. Miss Day's life up to the time she met Maurin had seemed to some of her friends to lack direction. Born on Brooklyn Heights, of Republican and Episcopalian parents, and brought up by them in Chicago, she attended the University of Illinois, and while there joined the Socialist Party. When she was nineteen and had just completed her second year at the University, she returned with her family to New York. Once here, however, she broke with her parents and began to associate with the intellectual set in Greenwich Village. Supporting herself by working at a number of minor jobs and free-lance projects, mostly journalistic or literary, she fell in love after a few years with a biology instructor, and entered into a common-law marriage with him that lasted until the birth of a daughter, in 1927—an event that, she has since said, caused her such an indescribable sense of joy and gratitude that she felt obliged to join the Catholic Church. This step meant either living in mortal sin or renouncing the child's father, who was an atheist and spurned the idea of marriage, and she reluctantly chose the latter. Then followed a period of five years during which Miss Day was at somewhat loose ends; she barely kept herself and her daughter alive by writing a novel, a play and several short stories, none of which was very successful.

Miss Day's real career began when, at the end of those five years, she met Maurin. Their meeting was a turning point in his life, too. Maurin, a member of a huge peasant family in the south of France—he had twenty-three brothers and sisters—had studied in the Christian Brothers' school in Paris for five years, then taught for another five years, but for most of his life had bummed around Canada and the United States, working in lumber camps and steel mills, and on farms, roads and construction projects; his longest job—as janitor of a Chicago tenement—lasted a little less than two years. He lived in cheap hotels, ate in skid-row beaneries and owned only the clothes on his back. From his reading in public libraries, he

acquired an extraordinary knowledge of political theory, Church history, economics and law, both canonical and secular. At some point in his wanderings (dates are hard to come by, for he was grandly uninterested in his personal life) he began to expound his ideas to all comers—in parks, flophouses, and cafeterias. In the mid-twenties, he settled in Woodstock, New York, where, perhaps stimulated by the cultural atmosphere of the place, he worked out his own form of communication—the “Easy Essay”. This consists of a theme with variations; it is a sort of verbal fugue, consisting of repetition and counterpoint, in short, stylized lines. The effect is soothing, hypnotic and droll, like that of a child talking to himself; it is often unexpected, too, for, like a child, Maurin took words and phrases literally and investigated them painstakingly, turning them around in different lights until fresh meanings flashed out. Following is a typical stanza:

The world would be better off
if people tried to become better.
And people would become better
If they stopped trying to become better off.

And another:

A bourgeois is a man
who tries to be somebody
by trying to be like everybody,
which makes him a nobody.

Before Maurin died, in 1949, at the age of seventy-two, he wrote a hundred and twenty Easy Essays, on such varied topics as war, capitalism, the Jews, the Irish, prostitution, higher education, banks, charity, Communism, Catholicism, the colonial question, birth control, industrialism, and agriculture. He used to recite the essays, in a kind of slow chant, on all possible, and many impossible, occasions, the first of the latter variety arising in 1927, when he addressed the Rotary Club of Kingston, New York. The essays were also printed and reprinted in the *Catholic Worker*, and even now they appear there from time to time, giving many readers the impression that Maurin is still alive.

When Maurin met Miss Day, he was living at his favourite hotel—Uncle Sam's, on the Bowery, forty cents a night. After the movement got started, he lived in one or another of its various Houses of Hospitality and farms, but he never spruced up and to the end of his life continued to wear clothes that were shabby even by Catholic Worker standards. Once, he went up to New Rochelle to speak at a women's-club luncheon. At the hour set for his appearance, Miss Day received a frantic phone call from the club's secretary, asking, "Where's Peter?" (The secretary had never met Maurin, but everybody called him Peter, just as everybody calls her Dorothy.)

"He must be there," Miss Day replied. "I put him on the train myself."

"No," the secretary said. "There's no one at the station but an old tramp snoozing on a bench."

"That's Peter," said Miss Day confidently—and correctly.

"He was the most *detached* person I ever met," an acquaintance of Maurin's has recalled. "He seemed to have no material needs. He was not interested in people, or even in concrete problems, but only in abstract principles. He was a man drunk with ideas." When the first issue of the *Catholic Worker* appeared, Maurin was disappointed. "Everybody's paper is nobody's paper," he remarked, in his best Easy Essay fashion. Miss Day was puzzled by this at first; then she understood. "I realized that, in his simplicity, he wanted nothing but his own essays to be printed, over and over again," she says. It was not vanity, she is convinced, for he was as impersonal toward himself as toward others; it was just that he knew he had a message and that the essays precisely conveyed that message. It was all there, he felt, so why clutter up the paper with other material, which just blurred the essence? Maurin's thinking, like his life, was stripped of extraneous luxuries—nuances, subtleties, complexities. He was a simplifier, a sort of abstract artist of ideas whose speciality was eliminating the superfluous, a man whose speech was yea, yea and nay, nay, and who was so thoroughgoing an absolutist that Einstein's law of relativity made him uncomfortable.

"I am an agitator," Maurin used to say, and agitate he did

—everywhere, all the time. In his old age, he travelled more than twenty thousand miles in one year, spreading his message. His groves of Academe were Union Square, Columbus Circle, and their equivalents in other cities, plus any public meetings that would invite him or, indeed, admit him.

In delivering his message, Maurin was as persistent as a process-server. When he got hold of the address of a likely prospect's home or office, he would go to see him all primed to talk as long as he was allowed to. Captive audiences especially attracted him, and he rarely wasted one. He would strike up a conversation in such stentorian tones with a fellow-passenger on a bus that all the other passengers had to hear, if not listen. Sometimes, he dropped in at amateur nights in neighbourhood movie houses; when his turn came, he recited Easy Essays. He was perhaps at his best with one or two listeners, although, like most ideologists, he was deficient in small talk. On the other hand, Maurin often showed much ingenuity in adapting himself to his listeners' interests. One night, in a cheap hotel, a girl knocked on his door and asked, "Want to have a good time, honey?" "Come in, come in!" he cried, and when she did, he inquired of her, "Now, what would you say a good time *means*, exactly? Let's discuss it." What the girl learned is not known, but the incident got Maurin interested in the problem of prostitution. He thought a lot about it and finally proposed a double-barrelled solution: Settle prostitutes and male alcoholics on Catholic Worker farms and let them marry and rehabilitate one another. Nothing much came of it, however.

IN Miss Day, Maurin found his ideal auditor, one who already agreed with him on basic theories and who needed only his clear-cut formulations of them and his messianic energy to start on her life work.

Early in 1933, when this life work began, the Roman Catholic Church in this country was still deeply uninterested in liberal social causes. Abroad, especially in France, "social Catholicism" had already become strong, but in the United States the hierarchy felt it wiser not to meddle in such matters.

Inspired by Maurin's idealism and Miss Day's intensity and drive, the Catholic Workers became agitators among the people; they foreshadowed that renaissance of the "lay apostolate" that has since arisen in the Church. A veteran of the early days recalls, "We just went out and *did* things. We didn't form a Committee to Promote Improved Interracial Relations. We took Negroes into our homes and lived with them. We didn't get up big-name letterheads to raise funds for strikers. We went out on the picket lines ourselves."

This direct-action approach, coupled with the fact that 1933 was the bottom year of the depression, gave the Workers a crusading appeal that struck fire among young priests, students in theological seminaries and some of the more enlightened members of the laity. Catholic Worker groups started up all over the place—often by spontaneous combustion, without any help from headquarters. A curious social paradox was involved. Theretofore, American Catholicism had been a lower-class affair, its followers consisting mostly of post-1840 immigrants from Catholic countries like Ireland, Poland, Italy, and Austria-Hungary; the upper classes—rated as such simply by virtue of having got here earlier—were solidly Protestant. But by 1930 the immigrants had begun to rise socially and economically, their children and even their grandchildren were going to college, and Catholicism began to produce middle-class intellectuals as full of reforming zeal as their Protestant counterparts had been for a century or more. As long as the majority of Catholics were proletarians, the hierarchy could, if it liked, deal with them in an authoritarian way and dragoon them into a conservative social pattern, but as the laity became richer and better educated, there was an increasing ferment of liberalism in the old bottles of the Church. Today, the hierarchy is still largely conservative—Cardinal Spellman, of New York, being more typical than Bishop Sheil, of Chicago—but the lower clergy and the laity have produced such Catholic phenomena as the interracial Friendship Houses; the St. Francis Xavier Labour College, in New York; the Chicago Catholic pro-labour monthly, *Work*; and a whole crop of so-called "labour priests", like Father John M. Corridan, who

played an important part in the 1951 insurgent longshoremen's strike.

Many of the individuals who are now working in such strange Catholic vineyards were given their first impulse and their training by the Catholic Worker movement. As Father Dennis Geaney, a Catholic educator, wrote of Miss Day in *Work*, "It was a Christian revolution she was starting. She was opening the minds of bishops, priests, seminarians, and lay people to the fact that Christianity was not a stuffy sacristy affair. She was a trumpet calling for all of us to find Christ in the bread lines, the jails, as a tenant farmer, migratory worker or Negro. We think of Church history as being made by popes and bishops. Here is a woman who has placed her stamp on American Catholicism. The seed she sowed in the thirties is bearing fruit a hundred-fold in the fifties."

The *Catholic Worker* was started, as the name suggests, as a competitor of the Communist *Daily Worker*, and it was no accident that most of its first issue, in 1933, was distributed in Union Square on May Day. In their maiden editorial, which asked, in effect, "Why should the Devil have all the good tunes?" Maurin and Miss Day wrote, "It's time there was a Catholic paper printed for the unemployed. The fundamental aim of most radical sheets is conversion of its readers to radicalism and atheism. Is it not possible to be radical and not atheist?" The Church's social programme is contained largely in two papal encyclical letters—the *Rerum novarum*, of Leo XIII (1891), and the *Quadragesimo anno*, of Pius XI (1931). These rebuke the greed of unrestrained capitalism, encourage labour unions and in general put the interests of the worker above the interests of private property. "Our job is to make the encyclicals click," Maurin once said.

In the thirties, the Catholic Workers were in the thick of events and Miss Day, despite a solid Republican and Episcopalian family background, was in the thickest of them. In a single year—1936—she travelled to Detroit to report on and help along the sitdown strikes out of which came the United Automobile Workers; to Lowell, Massachusetts, where there was a textile strike (the Catholic Workers fed the pickets and

supported the strike so enthusiastically that the mayor of Lowell phoned the Chancery in Boston to check up on this crowd of Catholics who were making a noise like Communists; the Chancery reassured him—firmly, if with resignation—that they were Catholics, all right); to Pittsburgh, where the C.I.O. was beginning to organize steel (she and Mary Heaton Vorse, the labour journalist, took a hotel room for a dollar and a half a day and visited every liberal priest in the district, including old Father Adalbert Kazincy, who had been almost alone among the Catholic clergy in backing the 1919 steel strike but now had many priests to keep him company); to Akron, where the rubber workers were striking; to Birmingham, where more steel workers were organizing; and to the Gulf Coast, where there was “trouble” in the shrimp fisheries. That year, the Catholic Workers in New York City spent thousands of dollars feeding and lodging pickets during the seamen’s strike that led to the establishing of the National Maritime Union; the fact that Joseph Curran, who became the head of the union, and most of the other leaders were then enjoying active support from the Communists didn’t bother them at all. In March, 1937, the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists was formed around a kitchen table in one of the Workers’ early headquarters, a house on Mott Street.

Owing in part to the vast changes that have come over the social scene in the last few years, the Catholic Workers are no longer as active in public affairs as they once were, and the circulation of their paper has dropped from a high of one hundred and fifty thousand in the mid-thirties to fifty-eight thousand, which is about equal to the combined circulations of the *Nation* and the *New Republic*. It is true that the *Catholic Worker* costs only one cent a copy (and twenty-five cents a year, which gives it the perhaps unique distinction of costing more than twice as much to subscribe to as to buy on the newsstands), and it is also true that “bundle orders”, which often end up as throw-aways, account for many of the copies, and that the business department is dilatory about culling out lapsed subscriptions. But even if only half the copies get into the hands of interested readers, this is quite an achievement for an uncompromisingly high-brow and extremist paper.

THE *Catholic Worker* is an eight-page tabloid of approximately the same size as the *Daily News*, which it does not otherwise resemble. Typical front-page banner headlines have included "CHRIST THE KING CAN ALONE RECONSTRUCT THE WORLD", "THE PROBLEM OF WAR AND THE OLD TESTAMENT", "THE COMING COLLAPSE OF MODERN INDUSTRIALISM", "THE NATURE OF MAN", and (in an especially gnomic mood) "SEAMEN GO EVERYWHERE". In its coverage of world events, the paper's forte is clearly not spot news—except when it gets hold of a scoop like the Holy Father's Christmas Message.

The *Worker's* contents are schizoid, accurately reflecting the two aspects of the movement—works of mercy and a concern with ultimate philosophical questions. About half its densely printed columns are given over to reports of happenings in the Catholic Worker "family" and to columnists of the chatty, rather than the thoughtful, kind. The other half is devoted to philosophical discussions of such topics as original sin, the supernatural basis of values, the evolution of capitalism and the relevance of Freud, Marx and Kierkegaard to Catholic doctrine. The juxtapositions of these with the homey items are at times dramatic. In one issue, for instance, Miss Day wrote, "Downstairs the baby is crying while Rita gets her breakfast ready: mashed prunes, baby cereal, and milk, all mixed together deliciously," while in an adjoining column Robert Ludlow, one of her fellow-editors, was ruminating along these lines: "And so it is with war, which cannot be said to be *absolutely* opposed to natural morality during certain periods of history, but which of its nature is contrary to the full realization of a natural morality that is based upon the full potentialities of man's nature." Most readers prefer the prunes to the polemics, and Ludlow's cerebrations sometimes bother even Miss Day. "I stand personally behind everything Bob Ludlow writes, though his way of expressing himself is at times peculiar, to say the least," she told a friend. "I don't think the majority of our readers know what he is talking about when he says, 'The compulsion to revolt can be explained as a manifestation of the libido.'" This kind of frank criticism is frequent among the

members of the *Catholic Worker* staff, and extends even to self-criticism. "I dislike writing, due to my lack of talent," wrote one of its columnists. "It kills you when you haven't got it. Right now, I feel cheated by having to meet a deadline with this tripe when I could be listening to the first game of the World Series."

One characteristic common to the two halves of the paper is length. Whether the contributors are writing about petunias or existentialism, they share a magnificent unconcern about space; it takes them a thousand words just to get warmed up. Another is Miss Day's column, called "On Pilgrimage", which is easily the paper's most popular feature—an odd composite of Pascal's "Pensées" and Eleanor Roosevelt's "My Day". A good hostess on the printed page as well as off, Miss Day in "On Pilgrimage" is constantly introducing the sublime if not to the ridiculous at least to the commonplace. In one instalment, after quoting at length from Newman and Saint Teresa of Avila, she continued, "Every time I am making what I consider a thorough confession—that is, telling tendencies that I wish I could overcome, like eating between meals, indulging in the nibbling that women do around a kitchen—and mention it as a venial sin not only in regard to myself but also to my neighbour who is starving all over the world, the confessor makes no attempt to understand but speaks of scruples. . . . These are tendencies to gluttony, and gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins." Only a person who is deeply thoughtful about religion would be likely to see a connection between nibbling in the kitchen and the seven deadly sins, and it is one of Miss Day's outstanding achievements that she has revived the linking of the serious and the trivial that saints and prophets once did so effectively but that long ago went out of fashion. The union of the everyday and the ultimate is the essence of the Catholic Worker movement.

"WHERE there is no love, put in love and you will take out love," wrote Saint John of the Cross. The Catholic Workers quote this and believe it. Usually it works, but when it doesn't,

they are not resentful, since they consider love an end and not a means. Some years ago, they rented an apartment in Cleveland to shelter single women; a homeless married couple was temporarily admitted; once in, they wouldn't move out or let anyone else in. The Workers, although they had paid the rent in advance, sighed and looked for another apartment.

The Workers' abhorrence of coercion extends even to proselytizing. They never ask the religion of the people they help, and the men on the bread line don't have to pray or sing psalms to get fed, nor do their boarders (whose favourite paper is the *Daily News*, not the *Catholic Worker*) have to attend the two brief daily services held in the Chrystie Street house.

Some of the Workers have at times found freedom oppressive. One of the most energetic toilers on the Easton farm once went on strike because he didn't have a boss. Sitting down under a tree, he announced, "I won't work until someone asks me to and tells me what to do." No one did, and after a time he gave up and grumpily picked up his hoe again. Maurin used to do a lot of heavy work, like breaking rocks for making roads; sometimes he went so far as to leave mauls lying around in conspicuous places, but if no one took the hint, he just swung all the harder. More practical and less principled than Maurin, Miss Day admits that when she gets "really desperate", she actually asks members of her staff to do this or that. If they refuse, however, there is no penalty. "I could stay in my room all day reading or just sitting and no one would say anything," one of her present crop of Workers said not long ago. "After a month, they might act a little cold toward me, of course."

Miss Day does have a certain authority, but it is an authority that is yielded to her voluntarily, out of love and respect—all too voluntarily, from her point of view, for she is a leader whose chief worry is that her followers have too great a tendency to follow. "Low in mind all day, full of tears," she wrote one evening in 1936 in a journal she has kept since she was a girl. "What with Easton, New York, Boston, Ottawa, Toronto and Missouri groups all discouraged, all looking for organization instead of self-organization, all weary of the idea of freedom and personal responsibility—I feel bitterly oppressed. I am in the

position of a dictator trying to legislate himself out of existence. They all complain that there is no boss. Today I happened to read Dostoevski's 'Grand Inquisitor', most apropos. Freedom—how men hate it and chafe under it, how unhappy they are with it!"

In the old days, Miss Day used to look at Maurin in moments of discouragement and, with a groan, say, "Why did you have to start all this anyway?" In a gloomy passage in her journal, she remarks, "Sometimes you get discouraged, there's so little change in people. Those who drank go on drinking, those who were ornery go on being ornery." But faith and hope always rise again in her, no matter how great the despair of the moment, and a few pages farther on she is writing, "The goodness of people makes my heart expand in happiness."

The New Yorker, October 4 and 11, 1952

BY THE WAY

THE QUESTION OF GOD

I TAKE "religious belief" to mean a belief that God exists.* And God? Not certainly the Old Testament Jahveh, with a beard and a human, all too human, personality. Nor, to me anyway, the other extreme: the Eddington-Jeans kind of God, whose presence manifests itself in the physical order of the universe. That the stars run in their courses, that the atoms split as per schedule—these regularities I can accept without calling in God to explain them. In such matters, I agree with the astronomer Laplace: "God? A hypothesis I have not found to be necessary." No, I take God to mean some kind of supernatural consciousness or order that is related, in a value sense (good, bad), to our life here on earth. This God I can neither accept nor reject. In fact, I cannot imagine him.

This insensibility is not because I am unconcerned with the moral problems that have driven men in the past to religious belief, and that today, in the age of Nazism, Stalinism and bombs from A to H, have understandably made many religious converts. On the contrary, since the thirties, when my mind was busy with all sorts of deep social, economic and historical problems (theories of capitalist crisis, historical materialism, unemployment, progressive v. imperialist wars, etc.) that now seem to me superficial, I have come to be interested in ethics to such an extent that I am constantly charged, by the people Philip Rahv has named the "secular radicals", with being religious myself. Yet such, unfortunately, is not the case. I say "unfortunately" because, from a purely intellectual point of view, God is a hypothesis I found to be, if not necessary, at least most convenient. For two reasons:

(1) I'm compelled to recognize the existence of two worlds which don't seem to connect: that of "science", where judgments can be established objectively, on the basis of quantitative

* This reply to a questionnaire from *Partisan Review* appeared in a symposium in the May-June, 1950, issue of that magazine.

criteria (measurements), and that of "values", where judgments are ultimately subjective and criteria are qualitative (one's own personal moral belief and æsthetic taste—these may be communicated to others and may influence them, for men do have "something in common" in those fields, but they cannot be established with the precision and universality of scientific judgments, since the appeal is a subjective one, from "me" to "you", and "you" is always different from "me"). Despite John Dewey's technically impressive effort to bridge the gap, in his *A Theory of Valuation*, I see it as still gap-ing. For some reason, this dualism makes me uncomfortable, and I try instinctively to show that the good also "works", that honesty is the best policy and beauty is truth, truth beauty. The most satisfactory bridge between the two worlds is . . . God. But, for me, the bridge is out.

(2) An even more important intellectual function of God is to serve as an ultimate base for one's system of values. Discussing the basis of one's moral code is like taking apart one of those wooden Russian eggs, each of which encloses a still smaller one: "I believe it is wrong to kill people." "Why?" "Because I have respect for humanity." "Why?" "Because I am human and recognize my brother's kinship." "Why?" etc., etc. If one believes in God, one finally gets down to an ultimate egg that is solid and so ends the taking-apart (analytical) process. God is simply and logically an absolute, an end and not a means, unique in our—that is, some of us—experience. But an unbeliever gets down to an egg that is hollow like the rest, but that contains no further egg. One's belief turns out to rest, ultimately, on air—"I just feel it to be so." This doesn't bother me too much emotionally, but it is undeniably awkward from a logical point of view.

Yet what can I do? I just don't seem to have the knack for religious experience. So many of my fellow men, past and present, have felt at home with the idea of God that I must admit it is a deep and apparently permanent human trait. Yet I'm sure that, if they had not, the idea would never have occurred to me at all. Not even in adolescence, when many Americans' personal experience seems to parallel the experi-

ence of the race (ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny) did I experience the slightest quiver of religious feeling. Nor do I now, although the brutal irrationality of the modern world has made me understand and sympathize with others' religious beliefs, and although in surprisingly many ways I find myself agreeing more with contemporary religious-minded people than with the "secular radicals". God, attractive though the idea is from an intellectual standpoint, simply does not engage my feelings or imagination.

This is all the more a pity since I have lost confidence in the dominant non-religious social tendency in this country today: the Marx-cum-Dewey approach represented by Sidney Hook (pure), the liberal weeklies (debased), the Reuther brothers and Senator Humphrey ("grass roots"), the Americans for Democratic Action (official) and *Partisan Review* (highbrow). This seems to me to have failed politically, culturally and even scientifically.

Politically: It has either failed or, where it has won power, has produced the horrors of Soviet Communism or the dull mediocrity of the Attlee and Truman governments. Lenin and Kautsky are the antithetical political types it has produced; both seem to me unsatisfactory.

Culturally: Its close connection with nineteenth-century philistine progressivism, well-meaning but thoroughly bourgeois, has meant that the creators of living culture, from Stendhal to Eliot, have existed outside it and mostly opposed to it. As Leslie Fiedler has recently noted, this split affects *Partisan Review* itself: the editors have had to rely largely on writers whom they, as ideologues, consider "reactionary" and "obscurantist".

Scientifically: Confidence in scientific method, unchecked by an independent system of human values, has encouraged an indiscriminate development of technique which now gives us Ford's monstrous River Rouge plant, the H-Bomb and the Nazi-Soviet organizations for controlling and conditioning human beings. This is a misuse of science, it is true, but one implicit in the ideology I am criticizing. For a more humane use of scientific method, grounded not on technique, know-how

and "does it work?" but rather on a value judgment as to what life should be like, one must turn to thinkers quite out of the liberal-socialist main stream: anarchists like Kropotkin, decentralists like Geddes, Borsodi and Gandhi, Utopians like Fourier.

The questions that now interest me are not the "big" ones: What To Do About Russia?, Is Planning Incompatible with Capitalism?, Will There Be a Depression?, Does America Need a Labour Party or a Revitalized Democratic Party—or just a Dozen More TVA's?, Is World Government the Answer to the H-Bomb? These seem to me either unimportant or unanswerable. So long as the dominant areas of the world are organized in vast super-states, whose economic base is large-scale industry and whose political base is tens of millions of helpless "citizens", I see no hope of significant improvement. Nor do I see any signs that any considerable number of my fellow men are now in a mood to break up such monstrosities into communities human in scale. So in terms of mass action (i.e., of politics as the word is now generally understood), our problems appear to be insoluble. They may yield, I believe, only to a more modest and, so-to-speak, intimate approach. Reform, reconstruction, even revolution must begin at a much more basic level than we imagined in the confident thirties.

It is the "small" questions that now seem to me significant. What is a good life? How do we know what's good and what's bad? How do people really live and feel and think in their everyday lives? What are the most important human needs—taking myself, as that part of the universe I know best, or at least have been most closely associated with, as a starting point? How can they be satisfied best, here and now? Who am I? How can I live lovingly, truthfully, pleasurably?

The thinkers I have found most helpful in answering, or at least talking about, these questions are: Christ, Socrates, Diderot, Jefferson, Thoreau, Herzen, Proudhon, Tolstoi, Gandhi, Simone Weil, and Albert Schweitzer. Most of these are religious, which is natural enough, since the above questions are the kind that, in our age, are asked mostly by religious

people. Yet, although when I read Tolstoi and Gandhi I see the logical convenience of the God-hypothesis, it does not move me emotionally; nor do I feel a spiritual need for it. I can believe that man is an end and not a means, and that to love one another is the greatest duty and pleasure, without giving this belief a religious basis. I suppose the period I feel closest to, in my values, is the Enlightenment, from which all that is most attractive in socialist as well as bourgeois-democratic doctrine derives.

Partisan Review, May-June, 1950

TOO BIG

THE TROUBLE is everything is too big. There are too many people, for example, in the city I live in. In walking along the street, one passes scores of other people every minute; any response to them as human beings is impossible; they must be passed by as indifferently as ants pass each other in the corridors of the anthill. A style of behaviour which refuses to recognize the human existence of the others has grown up of necessity. Just the scale on which people congregate in such a city breaks down human solidarity, alienates people from each other. There are so many people that there aren't any people; 7,000,000 becomes 0; too big.

Some episodes:

(1) A friend was going home in the subway at about ten o'clock one night. About half the seats in his car were filled. Opposite him two men were sitting on either side of a third, who was very drunk. Without any attempt at concealment, they were going through the drunk's pockets and taking his watch, money, etc. A dozen people watched the performance from their seats, but no one, including my friend, did anything, and at the next station the two men let the drunk slide to the floor and got off the train.

(2) An elderly woman I know slipped going down the stairs in an "El" station and fell all the way to the bottom, where she lay stunned and gasping. A crowd of people—it was the rush hour—were waiting on the platform at the foot of the stairs. Some of them stared at her but no one moved to help her. She told me that she lay there several minutes, too shaken up even to speak; several people remarked "she must be drunk". Finally, a man did come forward and helped her to her feet. She was frightened by the incident. She had lived in New York all her life without realizing she was living among strangers.

(3) I was told a similar story about another person—the friend of a friend. He was knocked down on a mid-town street

by a car late at night. The car didn't stop and no one saw the accident. He lay in the gutter, badly hurt and only half-conscious, for five or six hours. There must have been scores, probably hundreds of people who passed by, saw him, thought "must be drunk" (the formula by which, in the city, one denies human recognition) and went on their way. Finally, the next morning, a policeman investigated and called an ambulance. (The policeman is the only person in a big city who is professionally required to see people as people, to break the shell of apartness that encases each human being.)

(4) The wife of a friend of mine last year became psychotic and is now being treated in an institution. She had been acting "queerly" for some time, but the first big outburst came about ten o'clock one night as they were returning home after visiting friends in Brooklyn. The wife suddenly began to accuse her husband of attempting to poison her; she became increasingly violent and suddenly broke away and began running down the street screaming "Help! Help! He's trying to kill me!" She ran along thus for several blocks, shouting, before he could overtake her and try to calm her. Although most of the houses showed lighted windows, for it was still early, not a door opened, not a window went up, no one paid the slightest attention. When he finally got his wife back to their apartment building, she broke away again as he was unlocking the door, and rushed into the hallway screaming for help. This lasted at least ten minutes, he told me, and again not a door opened, no one appeared although her cries and screams echoed all through the building. Finally a youth came downstairs in his bathrobe and shouted: "Shut up! We're trying to sleep!" He disappeared again immediately. A half hour later, after my friend had persuaded his wife to go inside, he received the first help since the nightmare had begun: Again in the form of a policeman, who had been sent for by some of the neighbours. (When people are forced to see others as human beings, they make contact vicariously through the police. What a "style" of communal relations!)

But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus: "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus made answer and said: "A certain

man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner, a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said: 'Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay.' Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbour to him that fell among the robbers?" And he said, "He that showed mercy on him." And Jesus said unto him, "Go, and do thou likewise."

December 1946